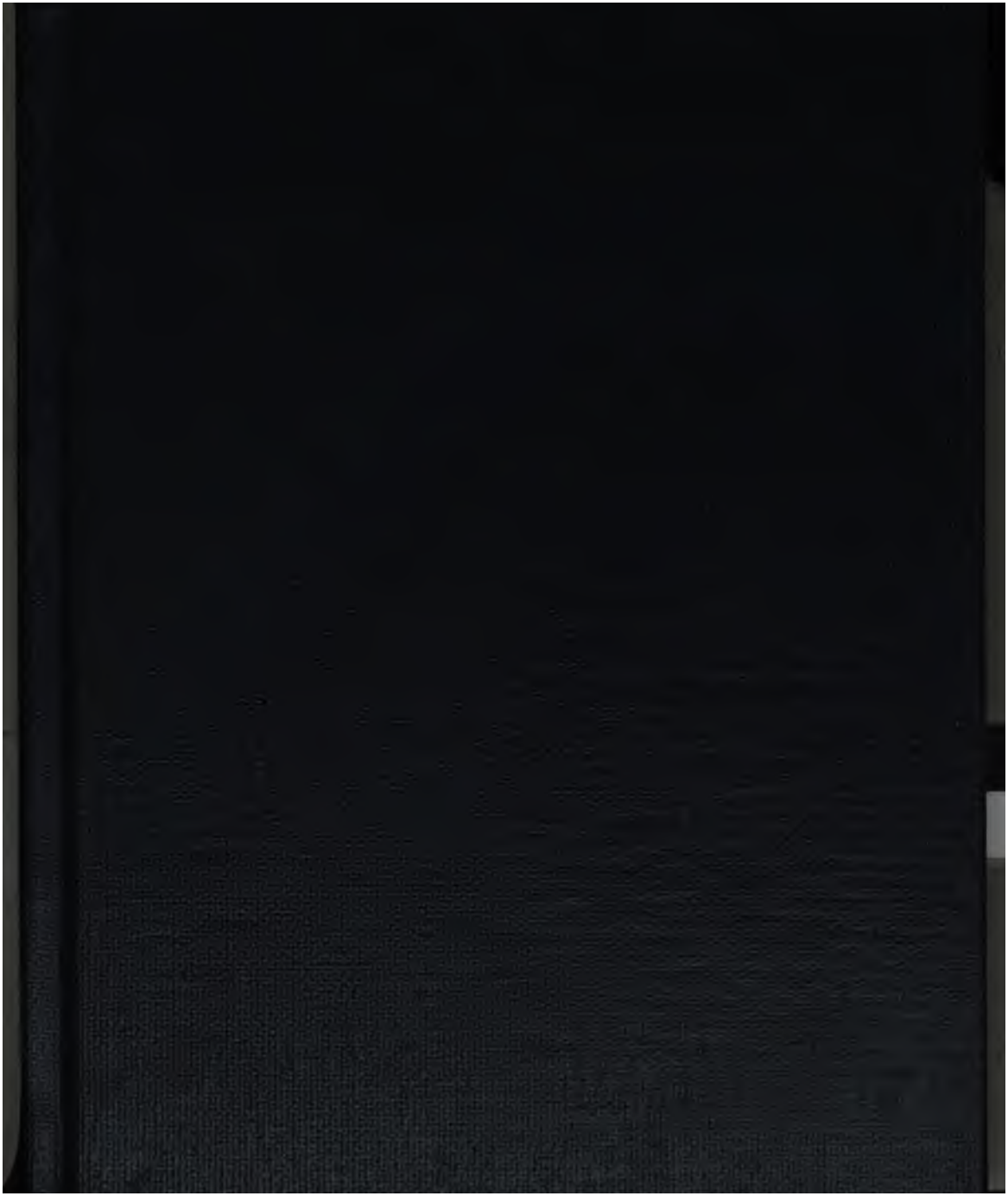

AMERICAN ACTOR SERIES

THE ELDER AND THE YOUNGER BOOTH

By ASIA BOOTH CLARKE

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PART I.

THE ELDER BOOTH.

1796–1852.

"And Booths were created for the entertainment of the people, and were much resorted to." — VIEW OF LONDON.

THE ELDER BOOTH.

JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH was born on the first day of May, 1796, in the parish of St. Pancras, London. His grandmother, Elizabeth Wilkes, was a relative of John Wilkes, and through his mother he inherited the blood of the Welsh Llewellyns.

The Booths and Wilkes of Clerkenwell were honorably known in their time; the house of Bishop Burnet, an historical old building, was the birthplace of many of the Booths, and the yard of the ancient church of St. John of Jerusalem still contains the gravestones of their descendants, on which the names of the two families are frequently intermingled. Ruin and demolition have been busy, the black mould of years is over the narrow streets and byways; but the little court keeps its name of "Booth," and the graves in the narrow slip of church-ground seem likely to last till doomsday.

Richard Booth, the father of the subject of the present sketch, was educated for the law; but, becoming infatuated with Republicanism, he left home, in company with his cousin John Brevitt, to embark for America (then at war with England), determined to fight in her cause. Booth was taken prisoner and brought back to England, where he subsequently devoted him-

self to the acquirement of knowledge and the practice of his profession. If any punishment was inflicted for his disloyalty, it has never transpired. He lived in affluent circumstances in Bloomsbury, and was a scholar of reputation, though of eccentric character; but his vaunted love of Republicanism rendered him unpopular both as a lawyer and as a man. He kept a picture of General Washington in his drawing-room, before which he insisted that all who entered should bow with reverence.

The other young rebel, Brevitt, escaped to America, fought against England, was made a captain, and subsequently married a Quakeress of Baltimore, readily transforming himself into a Friend and an American.

The subjoined copies of letters on the subject of this patriotic enterprise entered into by Booth and Brevitt may be interesting here, the original papers forming part of the collection of the Wilkes papers, now in the British Museum. Richard Booth at the age of twenty addressed the first to "the great Wilkes." The Defender of Liberty sent it immediately to the father, John Booth, who after perusal returned it with a letter expressive of his own views of the conduct of his son and nephew, vouching for their integrity and respectability, but evidently in much distress of mind. The reply is highly significant.

To John Wilkes, Esq., Princes Court, Westminster.

PARIS, Oct. 28th, '77.

SIR, — You will certainly be much surprised at the receipt of this letter, which comes from two persons of

whom you cannot possibly have the least knowledge, who yet at the same time claim the Honour of being of the same Family as yourself. Our conduct has certainly been in some respects reprehensible, for too rashly putting in execution a project we had for a long time conceived. But as it was thro' an ardent desire to serve in the Glorious cause of Freedom, of which you have always been Fam'd for being the Strict and great Defender, we trust the request we are about to make will be paid regard to. As Englishmen, it may be urged that we are not altogether Justified in taking arms against our native Country, but we hope such a vague argument will have no weight with a Gentleman of your well-known abilities; for as that country has almost parted with all its Rights, which have been given up to the present Tyrannic Government, it must be thought the Duty of every true Briton to assist those who oppose oppression and lawless Tyranny. And as the people of America are composed of men who have still the spirit of their brave Forefathers remaining, it becomes all who are Englishmen to exert their utmost efforts in their behalf, leaving their Country for that purpose; being no more (as we presume) than the Romans, in the war between Octavius and Anthony on the one part, and those illustrious worthys, Brutus and Cassius, on the other, going from the army of the Tyrants to serve in that of the latter, and therefore equally justifiable.

"Dulce et Decorum est pro patria mori,
Sed pro Libertate mori, Dulcissimum est."

The manner in which we have conducted ourselves

has been so very extraordinary as to be scarcely credible, but we are assured the Bearer of this Letter will convince you of its Authenticity. In short, we left England, and all the advantageous prospects we had there, purposely to go and serve in the Army of the Sons of Liberty, the brave Americans. In order to complete the Enterprise we came from London under a pretence of going on a party of pleasure to the Camp at Warley Common, but instead of proceeding thither, we went immediately for Margate and thence to Ostend, and have since arrived here, where we came to wait upon the Gentlemen who are Agents for the Congress in America, in order to the full completion of our Design of getting appointed officers in the Provincial Service, but for that purpose have since found it necessary to procure a Letter of recommendation from some Gentleman in the Interest of Liberty in England, and understand from Mr. Arthur Lee (who has promised to interest himself greatly in our behalf), that no recommendation will be of more service to us than yours. Our request therefore is, that you will condescend to give one in our favour, directed to that Gentleman at the "Hotel de la Reine, la Rue des Bons Enfants, à Paris," which you will please to deliver to the Bearer hereof, as soon as possibly convenient. And the favour will be gratefully remembered, and the name of Wilkes be always held in the greatest respect and veneration by, Sir,

Your most —— and obed' Serv'ts at command,

R. Booth.
John Brevitt.

To John Wilkes, Esqr.

Nov. 5th, 1777.

SIR,—I cannot but express the deepest concern when I reflect on the Imprudence of my Son and Nephew, in taking the liberty of addressing you without your first being apprised of it and your approbation for so doing. My uneasiness is not a little heightened when I consider to what Length their unguarded youth may lead them, and the various expressions which their thoughtless Pens may have made use of. I must assure you, sir, nothing could be more foreign to mine and to their Mother's inclinations, nor could anything stimulate them to it but their looking up to you as the sacred Protector of the greatest Blessing on Earth, fair Freedom, and your —— invariable struggles for the Protection of it.

I cannot, however, but flatter myself that should at any Time a correspondence take place between you and Mr. Lee, and these two youths be the subject of it, that you would speak of them as children of those who stood foremost in Friendship for you, and who are not a little happy in the connection of Blood with which we stand.

. . . These youths, sir, have, as you are pleased to observe, to lament their not being personally known to you; but I bless God, the best of characters can be had of them from Persons of the greatest merit and Fortune.

Your ob'dt humble S'rv't,

JOHN BOOTH.

"John Booth, Silversmith," further adds that he has exerted himself at the election at Brentford in Wilkes's behalf, and will use his interest, which he flatters himself is not inconsiderable, at a future time, not far distant, when he will also aid by a personal appearance.

He offers for his acceptance a piece of plate, not to obtain favor (meaning the restoration of his son and nephew), but in grateful return for what "I and every lover of Freedom owe to you as the Friend and Guardian of our rights."

These rebellious missives served to keep alive that fire of patriotism which found expression when, in later years, Booth named his sons Junius Brutus and Algernon Sydney. He married a Miss Game or Gam, whose relatives now living in South America trace their descent from an old hero of Agincourt. Mrs. Booth died at the birth of her third child, a daughter.

Junius Brutus received a classical education, and early showed a decided taste for drawing and literature. He learned printing, but abandoned it for the law, and for a time remained in his father's office, transcribing from his dictation dry and turgid documents. Evincing a desire for the navy, he was rated as midshipman on board the brig "Boxer," commanded by Captain Blythe. The vessel's destination being changed from the Mediterranean to the American coast, his father dissuaded him from going; and in an engagement with the enemy the "Boxer" lost all her crew, excepting a cabin boy.

Not possessing that universal genius generally attributed to those who attain eminence, Junius Booth es-

sayed one art after another, and, feeling the insufficiency of painting, poetry, and sculpture, his ever restless mind found its true element in the art of the actor. Avowing his determination to adopt the stage, he left his home against the wishes of his father, and made an engagement with Mr. Penley at Deptford. He began his professional career as *Campillo* in "The Honeymoon" on the 13th December, 1813, at a salary of one pound a week. He afterwards accompanied Mr. Penley to the Continent on a professional tour of some months.

The life of a strolling player, although beset with difficulties, possessed certain charms for the young aspirant, but he now yearned to try his talents in the metropolis. He had met with encouragement from many persons of taste and judgment, and accordingly applied to different London managers for an engagement, among others to Mr. Harris of Covent Garden Theatre. All efforts proved useless, however, and he reluctantly accepted an offer from the Worthing and Brighton Theatres for the season commencing in the summer of 1815, under the management of Mr. Thomas Trotter. The following letter is from Anthony Pasquin (Dr. Williams), and not without interest here.

BRUSSELS, June 9, 1815.

DEAR SIR,—I have received your letter. As to interfering further between you and Mr. Harris, I have only this answer to return, namely, that he is, and will be, the governing judge of what concerns his theatre; and I have done all that I can *at least immediately* do,

by introducing you to his notice. The rest remains with yourself. In your engagement at Brighton during the summer, I would recommend it to you to play some of your best parts, such as *Richard the Third*, *Norval*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, but particularly *Richard* for your benefit, as there may be *many eyes* directed toward you, in pursuance of the favorable report which I deemed it necessary to make of your exertions. I have not the honor to know Mr. Trotter, the manager, but am persuaded he will see clearly that you are far above the common class of theatrical *tyros*.

You have learning and a proper sense of your present critical situation; then use both to the furtherance of your dramatic reputation; but do not attend to the suggestion of every trifling observer, but rather act from your own feelings with an occasional reference to that great model of real perfection in many characters, Mr. John Kemble. But above all preserve a modest demeanor, though you may feel internally vain, as all men have vanity, with this distinction, that the blockhead renders his weakness apparent, and the sensible man does not.

I shall be in England, in all probability, before the announcement of the winter theatres. When you arrive at Brighton, seek for a Mr. Sicklemar, and present him my kindest remembrances, for he is truly a worthy man, and his advice and protection may be eminently serviceable to you.

We are all in a state of military bustle, with the common enemy at our gates.

Believe me your friend and very humble servant,

J. Williams.

P. S. Keep the *terms* of your engagement a secret; and read at your leisure the part of *Achmet* in "Barbarossa."

To Mr. Junius Booth.

Mr. Booth received thirty shillings a week at the Worthing Theatre. He afterward became prompter, which capacity he filled until October. Harley, the comedian, was a member of the company. Mr. Booth finally succeeded in securing an engagement at Covent Garden Theatre, and was announced for *Silvius* in "As You Like It," instead of *Richard*, as he had been led to expect. His friends were few, though sincere and untiring in their endeavors to have him placed in his true light, and were indignant that managers should neglect with such determination one who had given so much promise of greatness. He continued acting at that house during the season, occasionally playing subordinate characters, and receiving a salary of two pounds per week. The most important part assigned him was *Henry* in the "Maid and the Magpie." It was frequently related at this period of his career, to the discredit of Miss Sally Booth, that she was painfully concerned lest Mr. Booth should be mistaken for a relative of hers, and modestly suggested that he should add a final "e" to his name.

Pained by the contemptuous coldness of those who surrounded him, and perceiving that no advancement awaited him, he again joined Mr. Trotter of the Worthing and Brighton Theatres. He filled the position of acting manager for two guineas a week and a ben-

efit; but feeling his position intolerable, he left the theatre in a despairing mood. He had previously been cast for *Harlequin*, but was prevented from playing it by an accident which he met with at rehearsal. He had frequently personated *Fitzharding* in the comedy of "Smiles and Tears," and had rendered himself a great favorite in the part. After a brief visit to Windsor, Mr. Booth once more returned to Worthing, where he was immediately re-engaged by his former manager.

He appeared subsequently at the Brighton Theatre, when Edmund Kean, who was announced for the part of *Sir Giles Overreach*, failed to arrive, and Mr. Booth was asked to assume the character. The audience was small, and evinced much disapprobation on the entrance of the substitute; but he had not spoken many lines ere their attention became riveted, and before the close of the play he was warmly greeted and received every mark of their satisfaction. Murmurs of his "presumption" and "youthful ambition" died away altogether, and he was hailed by acclamations of delighted surprise.

Mr. Booth played *Bertram* at Worthing with increased honors the warmth of his reception overpowered him, so suddenly had the tide turned in his favor. His *Richard III.* was acknowledged as a great performance, and at last the public discerned that the young actor had genius and determination.

At the suggestion of the Hon. Mrs. Chambers, Lord Erskine, Garrow, Dr. Williams, and others, Mr. Harris was induced to give Mr. Booth a trial-night at Covent

Garden Theatre, and in a more important character than he had yet attempted there. The letter bearing this news passed Mr. Booth on his way to London, and much to his astonishment he found himself on his arrival announced to perform *Richard III.*, after having written fruitlessly to every metropolitan manager for an engagement. On Feb. 12, 1817, he appeared as *Richard* at this theatre, and earned the warmest approbation and applause.

A number of newspaper criticisms of this performance are here appended.

"Mr. Booth repeated his performance of *Richard* last night with increased success, and amidst the rapturous plaudits of the audience. To all the principal scenes he gave most forcible and masterly effect, and may be said to have already established himself at the height of his profession. On 'Guy Mannering' being given out for this evening, there was a general call for 'Richard' again, on which Mr. Abbott announced that the managers intended 'Richard the Third' for performance again on Monday night. The house then rang with plaudits in anticipation of the further delight to be afforded by so exquisite a performance. Among the personages of distinction present, we noticed their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, who appeared highly delighted with the fine acting of Mr. Booth." — *Feb.* 14, 1817.

"The gentleman whom the managers have cleverly procured to be a *Richard the Third*, at Covent Garden, is surely one of nature's duplicates; — if he be not Mr. Kean himself, he is as ingenious a fac-simile as we ever

beheld. We never saw a better imitation. Mr. Booth (so the gentleman is named) has all Mr. Kean's tempestuous action in his passionate scenes, and all and more of his familiarity in calm ones; he has the eyes, face, and walk of Kean, — the same stamp of the foot, the same voice, except in its vehement tones, which, instead of being broken, hoarse, and fatiguing, are deep, loud, and coarse. Mr. Kean's tones in the last scenes of 'Richard' are indeed, as a friend once observed, like a hackney coachman's at one o'clock in the morning; Mr. Booth's are of the same kind, but not in so ripened a state. When we entered the box at Covent Garden, the other evening, and heard Mr. Booth in the scene with *Lady Anne*, we really were doubtful whether we had not mistaken the house, and wandered into Drury Lane. He leant against the side-pillar, as *Lady Anne* advanced, in the very attitude that Mr. Kean adopts; and all his tones, looks, and movements were Drury Lane property. He dressed the part as Mr. Kean dresses it, and made due pauses, starts, and stares, as that actor makes them. Now we honestly confess, that never since we wielded the critical pen, have we at any time found ourselves so puzzled in our opinions of an actor as in the case before us. The two houses have long been running a race of similarities, and now, indeed, they are neck and neck. The two *Maids* and the two *Magpies* were not more alike than the two *Richards*. If Mr. Booth has made Mr. Kean's acting a study, and has merely given us an imitation of what is in itself but an imitation, then we utterly give him up, and consider him no better than

the shadow of a shade. But if nature has, by way of a joke, made two bodies alike, and given them similar conceptions and sounds, then Mr. Booth must not be rudely cast aside, because his better half happened to be seen first. It might have been Mr. Kean's fate to have been styled an imitator. There is one thing, however, that we shrewdly suspect, which is, that nature has put both souls into one body: we will not, in the present stage of the enquiry, declare which we think the unfurnished one. Mr. Booth had great difficulties to struggle against on his first appearance. The image of *Richard* has been stamped by one hand on the minds of all parties. Any copy would be immediately detected, any deviation be instantaneously perceived and opposed. . . . Every personator of *Richard* must fight like a madman, and fence on the ground, and when disarmed and wounded, thrust with savage impotence with his naked hand,

'And sink outwearied, rather than o'ercome.'

Mr. Kean has passed this manner into a law, and woe be to him who breaks it. No one but Mr. Kemble can be allowed to parry like a schoolboy, and drop like a gentleman. Mr. Booth was sure of the disapprobation of a certain set of these would-be judges, who would hiss him for misunderstanding his part if he did not follow Kean, and who would hiss him likewise for copying if he did.

'To both their hates must he be accessary.'

As we felt so puzzled in our opinion of Mr. Booth's merits, we made a point of seeing *Richard* again rep-

resented by him. On the second night he played much better, though still he was Kean, and a full audience earnestly cheered him. This strange similarity between the two tragedians is a great misfortune to them.

'For both or one of them, the time is come.'

If they be of equal merits, — though this we do not at all believe, — the public will hate them both, for it hates equality.

'Two at a time, there's no mortal can bear,'

so said *Macbeth;* and a profound reasoner on human actions in the 'Comedy of Errors,'—

'One of these men is genius to the other.'

We shall perhaps hear Mr. Booth applying the last two lines of the same play: —

'We came into the world like brother and brother,
And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.'"

Champion, Feb. 16, 1817.

"In the course of the present week the managers have performed their full duty in endeavoring by their novelties to dispel the dulness of the season, and to withdraw us, by splendors within, from the fogs, damps, and darkness without. In no country in the world, we believe, is the drama, both as respects actors and writers, at a nearer approach to perfection than in England. The German stage is intolerable. And if the French exceed us in levity, that levity is founded on passions and feelings which we hope will never have place amongst ourselves. It is to the praise of an

English audience, that they command decency and morality in their dramatic writers, and that even in their lighter moments they never forget their higher interests, and the important duties of decorum, faith, and modesty. . . . But he must be a bold man who could venture to enter the lists with Kean, in a part like this, and who could expect anything from an audience having Kean before their eyes, but a bare indulgence and pardon. . . . Mr. Booth did not disappoint the expectation of his friends, and appears to have much exceeded the hopes of the audience. He was vigorous, spirited, and intelligent. His figure is small, — smaller even than Kean's; his voice in its natural tones melodious, but husky and rough when overstrained; his countenance is manly, and full of expression; and as respects mere looks, his face and profile certainly exceed those of Kean." — *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, Feb. 16, 1817.

These carefully written critiques, as well as those of later date, show how vivid an impression the young aspirant created, although coming as he did in direct opposition to the established and elder favorite, Kean.

Booth's friends, while rejoicing in his success, persuaded him to defer further repetition of his performance in consequence of the great excitement and fatigue which he had undergone. As no definite engagement had been effected, he was advised to demand suitable terms; but Mr. Harris reminded him of the salary he received during the preceding season, namely, two pounds a week, and proposed to pay him five instead. This offer being declined, a controversy

arose, which Mr. Booth ended by desiring to have his name taken from the bills. Mr. Edmund Kean of the rival theatre, hearing of this misunderstanding, immediately drove in his chariot to visit Mr. Booth, overwhelmed him with congratulations, and told him to "jump in; he had got an engagement for him."

They drove at once to the Committee Room of the Drury Lane Theatre, where Lord Essex, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Lamb were assembled; a paper was drawn up which Mr. Booth was hurriedly induced to sign, not being allowed time for quiet reflection or the advice of others. These gentlemen in their friendly conversation dwelt on the unjust reception of his proposal by Mr. Harris, assuring him that he would have no difficulty whatever, as his name was already omitted in his bills. Mr. Booth considered himself entirely released from the Covent Garden Theatre and duly engaged at Drury Lane. Mr. Harris, being apprised of this stratagem, hastened to the rival house, and expostulated with these gentlemen, but in vain, as they considered Mr. Booth's engagement at Drury Lane irrevocable. The following newspaper extracts are interesting here, and explain the position of affairs.

"The tragedy of 'Richard the Third,' in which Mr. Booth was to perform the principal character for the third time, was on Thursday night announced for yesterday evening [at Covent Garden]. Instead of this, however, the play of 'Pizarro' was advertised in the bills of the day, without any mention whatever being made of Mr. Booth. The audience therefore, somewhat disappointed at not finding '*Richard* himself again,'

called for an explanation, on which Mr. Fawcett came forward and addressed them as follows: —

"'Ladies and Gentlemen, — As far as I am able, I will state to you the reason why the play was changed and Mr. Booth did not appear in the character of *Richard* this evening. From the conversation that gentleman last had with the proprietors it appears to have been his own fault. I was not present at the conversation, but the particulars of it have been detailed to me. Mr. Booth appeared particularly anxious that before he again played the character of *Richard* on Monday evening his salary should be fixed. Mr. Harris told him that in the present state of the business he considered that mode would be neither for Mr. Booth's advantage nor the interest of the theatre, but that his salary should be settled from the moment of his first performance on these boards, subject to subsequent arrangement that might depend on his success and the advantage he might be to the theatre. I beg leave to call to your recollection, ladies and gentlemen, that the charge of parsimony has never been made against the managers of this theatre, but the crimination has always been on the other side. A variety of instances of great salaries given to excellent actors and actresses may be adduced to illustrate the liberality of the proprietors; and in the cases of the lamented Mr. Cooke and our great favorite Miss O'Neill the point is conclusive. That lady and gentleman were engaged to perform at this theatre on very humble salaries, and that on articles which would have continued for three or five years; but no sooner were their abilities appreciated, and they drew money to the

treasury of this theatre, than their articles were instantly torn, and liberal remuneration, commensurate with their talents, awarded them. I am sadly afraid that Mr. Booth has been ill-advised in this business, and that he demanded in the first instance such a salary as future efforts would no doubt have entitled him to.' (Here loud cries of 'You 've driven him to Drury Lane, to the country again.') Mr. Fawcett resumed: Nothing could be further from his wish than that Mr. Booth should return to the country; he should be happy to see him on these boards again; he hoped the door of reconciliation was still open, and that all would be amicably arranged." — *London Morning Post*, Feb. 18, 1817.

"The circumstance of Mr. Booth's engagement at this theatre [Drury Lane] seems to have excited an universal sensation in the public mind, if we are to judge from the extremely crowded and brilliant assemblage which was collected last night to witness his *Iago*. His imputed similarity in voice, in figure, and in countenance to Mr. Kean, aided by his own intrinsic genius, has already obtained for him a very distinguished attention; but that attention was heightened to a degree of intenseness seldom experienced before in a British theatre, when both the image and the substance were placed side by side, and an opportunity was offered to compare instantaneously their every word, look, and action. It is at such a moment that their relative merits can alone be ascertained with correctness; and it appeared to us that the resemblance so much celebrated was by no means uniform or intentional. Nature has undoubtedly cast both Mr. Kean and Mr. Booth in

a mould nearly the same, but it is certain that she has infused a much greater portion of the divine fire through the composition of one than through that of the other. The theatre was filled in every quarter at an early hour; we believe that if it were twice as large it would have been crowded on this occasion. The moment Mr. Booth entered he was saluted by a general and most ardent cheering; he appeared completely master of his feelings; when he came to that passage in which *Iago* says, 'I know my price,' the pit immediately seized the allusion and testified their sense of the treatment which he received from the proprietors of the rival house. His conception of the character was throughout perfectly correct, and there was no part of it which he did not delineate with the power and spirit of a master. The lines, 'He who steals my purse,' he delivered with much emphasis and propriety, but the scene in which he excelled, and in which perhaps he cannot be rivalled by any other person than Kean himself, was that scene where, while he tells *Othello* to beware of jealousy, he is anxiously distilling into his mind every essence of which that torturing feeling is composed. . . . Towards the conclusion the business of *Iago* gradually decreases, his schemes all succeed, his revenge is satiated, and the opportunities of display become proportionally lessened. Mr. Booth seemed conscious of this, and he wisely avoided bestowing any importance upon that which of itself deserved none. His departure from the scene he marked in a novel and rather a hazardous manner. He looked at *Othello* with a significant gaze, then pointed to his own wife, as if to express that her violation by the

Moor was the cause of all his perfidy. He then struck his breast in a triumphant manner, meaning that his vindication was complete and gratifying. If this pantomime had been abbreviated, we are sure it would be more consistent with the dignity of tragedy, and would have reflected a higher lustre on the judgment of the actor. . . . When he (Mr. Kean) first entered, he took Mr. Booth by the hand. An action so generous and so amiable could not have escaped the observation of the audience. From that moment they took every opportunity of showing their admiration of his unrivalled genius; and surely never was their applause more richly merited. . . . The piece was given out for repetition on Saturday night, amidst the unanimous acclamations of the audience. Several of the Nobility were present, and a few ladies who seemed just to have left the Queen's drawing-room were conspicuous in the stage boxes." — *Morning Post.*

An English theatrical work of 1825, referring to this production of "Othello," says: —

"Booth's *entrée* at the very opening of the scene was hailed with the most flattering plaudits, and by a house crowded to suffocation. When Kean and Booth entered together the applause was electrical. The circumstance itself is only paralleled by the conjunction of Garrick and Quin; and our modern performers looked at one another and then at their auditors, as if uncertain what to do. At length, after Kean had bowed at least half a dozen times, they stood closely together and indicated their gratitude by both bowing very respectfully to the whole house. Kean on this occasion outdid

all his former outdoings; and though *Iago* is not a part for applause, Booth elicited it in every scene."

Mr. Kean, the acknowledged king of tragedy, did not intend to allow a continuation of this rivalship. He had previously seen the power of his adversary, and merely proffered him a taste of adulation and success before attempting his downfall. It is needless to explain that in the signing of that fatal memorandum Mr. Kean had a covert design. He knew the contents in their literal and technical signification, and Mr. Booth did not.

The scheme was soon developed, as Mr. Booth received information that he would not be allowed to play any of Mr. Kean's parts, *Richard*, *Hamlet*, *Bertram*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, etc., but that he was to perform *Richmond* on Thursday to Mr. Kean's *Richard*, which was in direct violation of his engagement.

In the publication of these unfortunate events many gentlemen who were spoken of as Mr. Booth's friends proved to be his secret enemies; their conciliatory manner might have been deemed politic at the time, and under existing circumstances judicious, but it is certain that their machinations were adroitly veiled, and his youth, inexperience and gratitude made him an easy prey in the hands of clever men.

Kean himself, Judas-like, betrayed with a show of kindness, although the mention of his name in later years elicited from Mr. Booth only admiration for him as an actor; he said, "Kean was an untaught genius; therefore he followed Nature." As was written of himself in after years, "That master mind of Junius Brutus

Booth, like Homer, learnt of Nature, which is the breath of Genius."

Oxberry's "Dramatic Biography" thus speaks of the quarrel between Kean and Booth: —

"Those who are inclined to believe that Edmund Kean did all this from feeling toward Mr. Booth are welcome to retain their opinions; but we beg leave to differ. That Kean wished Booth to have a competent salary we believe; but that he also wished and intended to crush any hope of rivalry on his part we are absolutely sure. During his career Mr. Kean has never suffered any performer to have a chance of eclipsing him in public favor; he threw up *Manuel* because Rae was so excellent in *De Zelos*, — he would not perform in the 'Italians,' because he feared to stand beside Miss Kelley's *Page*, and he would not allow David Fisher to play *Hamlet* for his own benefit."

Excitement was now at its height, and placards were teeming with admiration of the *Moor* and his *Ancient*. The rival players were the principal topic of conversation, and parties were known as the *Keanites* and the *Boothites*.

At the time of receiving the information from Drury Lane that he was no longer to appear in equal parts with Kean, he was also notified by Mr. Harris that his engagement at Covent Garden was not legally ended. Suffering from bodily weakness and long-continued worry of mind, these new distresses wrought upon his excitability so as to unnerve him for further struggle.

He was induced to refuse to play *Iago*, and a note was despatched to Mr. Rae at Drury Lane to that

effect. This was at three o'clock, — in full time for a change of performance or a placarded apology for Mr. Booth's non-appearance in the evening.

A London journal says: —

"A great disappointment occurred at this theatre [Drury Lane] on Saturday evening, from the unexpected absence of Mr. Booth, who had been announced to perform the part of *Iago* for the second time. The house was filled at an early hour, and after considerable delay had taken place, and much disapprobation expressed, the manager came forward, and read the following note from Mr. Booth: —

"'Mr. Booth presents his compliments to Mr. Rae, and begs to inform him that, from the excessive anxiety of mind he has experienced during the past week, he finds himself so extremely unwell that he shall not be able to perform this evening (Saturday), and he has gone out of town to recruit himself.'

"Under these circumstances Mr. Rae informed the audience that Mr. Kean had kindly consented to perform *Iago*, and that he (Mr. Rae) would undertake the part of *Othello*. To this arrangement considerable opposition arose, and there was a pretty general call for Kean in *Othello* instead of *Iago*. Amidst the confusion, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester entered the house, and 'God Save the King' was called for, and sung with great effect, and amidst the warmest demonstrations of loyalty from all parts of the house. The whole audience is said to have become so perfectly good-humored that in the confusion Mr. Kean was permitted to follow his original design of acting *Iago* without further opposition." — *Feb.* 24, 1817.

The following "Circular" explains itself: —

"THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE,
Feb. 24, 1817.

"In consequence of the disappointment the public experienced on Saturday night at Drury Lane Theatre, by the non-appearance of Mr. Booth in the character of *Iago*, and hand-bills having been posted yesterday (Sunday) in all parts of the town, stating that Mr. Booth had entered into an engagement with the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre for three years, the manager of Drury Lane Theatre thinks it due from him to the public to state that on Monday last, the 17th inst., Mr. Booth signed a written engagement to Drury Lane Theatre for three years, on terms proposed by *himself*, having previously stated that he had no engagement with the Covent Garden proprietors, that all treaties with that theatre were at an end, and that he had requested his name to be taken out of their bills, which had accordingly been done. In pursuance of which engagement, he performed *Iago* on Thursday night, and was announced to repeat the character on the 22d, 24th, and 25th inst."

To this Mr. Booth replied: —

GENTLEMEN, — In an unguarded moment I quitted Covent Garden Theatre (where the most eligible situation for the exertion of my professional talents was open to me), to go over to Drury Lane Theatre, where I have since found to my cost that every character which I was ever desirous or capable of playing was already

in possession, and that there was no chance of my appearing in the same. What occasion therefore could you have for me, unless to crush any talent that I may possess in its infancy?

I have seen through my error, and have therefore renewed the negotiation which was so unfortunately interrupted with the proprietors of the Covent Garden, and have just signed a regular article with them for three years. Consequently I have no longer the power of appearing again at Drury Lane, and you will have the goodness to take my name entirely out of your bills.

I have heard, gentlemen, that your treasury has benefited considerably from my appearance on Thursday last. I ask no pecuniary recompense for it. I only request that you will not seek to persecute or molest a young man just entering into life, and who cannot afford either to be shelved (according to the theatrical phrase) at Drury Lane Theatre, or to be put into such characters as must infallibly mar all his future prospects.

I have the honor to be, gentlemen,

Your very obedient humble servant,

J. B. BOOTH.

And the following came from Covent Garden: —

"In reply to the Circular dated 'Feb. 24th, Drury Lane Theatre,' the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre feel it incumbent on them to state to the public the following facts: —

"1st. That Mr. Booth having performed two nights at Covent Garden Theatre, and a negotiation going on

for a three-years engagement, the Drury Lane Sub-committee, previous to their opening a treaty with Mr. Booth, were bound, by long-established, honorable agreement, to apply to the Covent Garden proprietors, and learn from them if such negotiation was broken off. But, contrary to such fair and open communication, they, in the absence of the Covent Garden proprietors, sent for Mr. Booth to the Committee Room, where he hastily signed a memorandum for an engagement, against which one of the Covent Garden proprietors, on his coming to town an hour afterwards, openly and vainly remonstrated with the sub-committee.

"2d. That under such circumstances the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, conceiving they had a lawful claim on Mr. Booth's services, were about to take legal measures against him, when, through the medium of a friend of Mr. Booth, who saw his distress of mind in consequence of the perilous situation in which he had rashly and unguardedly placed himself, the negotiation was renewed, and finally terminated on Saturday, when the Covent Garden proprietors would with pleasure have permitted Mr. Booth to perform for that evening at Drury Lane Theatre, but he was literally too ill to make the attempt.

"3d. For the truth of the above statements, and for the justice of their case, the proprietors of the Covent Garden Theatre are ready to refer to any tribunal competent to decide on theatrical questions; but whatever may be the result of the decision, the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre *entreat* that Mr. Booth may not be made the victim of disputes between the two the-

atres; his youth and inexperience alone having placed him in a dilemma from which it is hoped the usual candor and liberality of Englishmen will still rescue him."

A disgraceful riot ensued, and however vacillating and inexplicable Mr. Booth's conduct appeared, there were many who attributed it to waywardness and inexperience, and were willing to accept him at either house, not cognizant of the design to deprive him of position, the means of livelihood, and ultimately to effect his banishment from the stage. Considering the network of difficulties which entangled him, surely his offence was pardonable, as he possessed in an eminent degree the desire to redeem his faults; but he was the victim of a hired mob set on by enemies, and his apologies and explanations were received without credence or attention.

An excited audience awaited the entrance of Mr. Booth as *Richard III.* on the evening of February 25, at Covent Garden; he was greeted by great applause and hisses, and for a time the tumult was deafening. He bravely, yet modestly withstood the displeasure evinced, and when quiet was gradually restored the play proceeded, not without frequent outbursts of mingled signs of disapprobation and pleasure.

The following is from the *Morning Post*, Feb. 26, 1817:—

"The singular contest between the two winter theatres for the services of Mr. Booth has occupied so much the attention of the town that it is quite unnecessary for us to recapitulate the circumstances under

which it was commenced. . . . In consequence of Mr. Booth having been announced for *Richard*, the house [Covent Garden] was last night crowded to an overflow in a few minutes after the doors had opened, and long before the rising of the curtain the tumult which even at that early hour prevailed strongly reminded us of the scenes which marked the first opening of this theatre when we were nightly deafened by the shouts of the boisterous O. P.'s. The curtain drew up about half past six, and Mr. Booth immediately presented himself to the audience dressed for the character he was announced to sustain. His appearance was highly prepossessing, and promised for a moment, from the fervent plaudits which were heard, to gain the fervor of the house. But the voice of partial resentment soon burst forth from several persons, chiefly in the pit, and the marks of kindness which he received from the majority of the audience were encountered by a noise sufficient to frustrate all his efforts; every appeal to their humanity to be allowed a hearing if only for a moment was in vain. Inflexibly fixed to punish, they would not allow of explanation or apology; his sentence had been predetermined, and they would not listen to one word in mitigation of the stern decree, though in all parts of the house the plaudits were very great, accompanied by the waving of handkerchiefs and hats by the ladies and gentlemen. After some minutes Mr. Booth bowed repeatedly to the audience, and retired. Mr. Fawcett now came forward, but the uproar continued as before. He patiently waited for the tumult to subside, but to no purpose. All the usual

means for procuring silence were resorted to, but without effect. A note was thrown on the stage. Mr. Fawcett knelt down by the lamps to read it, but could not make it out. Another was thrown to him, which he read and bowed as if assenting to something which it contained. Many more scraps of paper were forwarded in the same way. Mr. Fawcett appealed to the house on the impossibility of his reading and answering so many communications. The noise continued, and he at last left the stage without having succeeded in making himself heard. It was attempted to begin the play, and something like the first scene was represented in pantomime. The second opened; *Richard* again came on, and the storm raged with aggravated fury, the applause still decidedly predominating. The hostile party were more virulent than before, and he could find no opportunity for reciting the soliloquy, —

> 'Now are our brows crowned with victorious wreaths,
> Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings.
> Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front.'

He again attempted to address the audience, but being still refused a hearing, he left the stage amid the noise of the contending parties. He soon returned, attended by a standard-bearer, exhibiting a placard with the words, 'Grant silence to explain.'

"This, however, was useless, and they retired from the stage; the play proceeded with the omission of the first scene of 'Richard,' and was regularly gone through with in dumb show, the applause still decidedly

predominating. Several fights took place in the pit, of which it was impossible to ascertain the object or result. In the scene where *Richard* appears with the children, a new effort was made to propitiate the non-contents. A person suddenly displayed a placard, inscribed 'Mr. Booth wishes to apologize.' Applause and disapprobation followed. Mr. Fawcett came on, and led Mr. Booth to the front. The latter bowed with all humility, and implored permission to speak. The boon was not granted; another placard was exhibited, 'Can Englishmen condemn unheard?' This was also ineffectual, and again it was attempted to proceed with the play. Mr. Barrymore brought Mr. Booth forward to address the house, but this attempt ended like all those which had preceded it. The tumult lasted to the end of the play, of which not one word had been heard from beginning to end. Mr. Booth, in many parts, under the multiplied difficulties with which he had to contend, frequently exerted himself in a manner that afforded the highest ideas of his ability, and made it impossible not to regret that a young man of such great merit should have been placed in such a situation. When the curtain fell, the malcontents put forth repeated shouts and groans; the applause predominated, and a general wave of handkerchiefs and hats took place.

"Now that the play was ended, Mr. Fawcett again led on Mr. Booth, who seemed heart-broken on the occasion. Silence was again solicited, but without avail. They both bowed and retired. The farce was then commenced. A person in the boxes attempted

to address the house, and gave much offence to some who were near him. This led to a fight; one person spoke against Mr. Booth, and his conduct was very generally resented. A new cry was raised for the manager, who after some time was permitted to speak: —

"'Ladies and Gentlemen, — If I at all understand the call made on me, it is because an individual has broken in upon the decorum of the theatre.'

"He was interrupted by persons demanding that the orator in the boxes should be removed. Mr. Fawcett resumed: —

"'I have been desired to send the peace officers to remove the person complained of. This, in such a case, while I am manager of this theatre, is what I cannot do. If the person has offended, it is in your own breasts to turn him out.'

"He then retired amid hisses and applause. At the conclusion of the farce, 'Killing no Murder,' Mr. Fawcett was again obliged to come forward, and, in an address, explained that he had come from his home, whither he had retired, to answer this demand. And as he apprehended it was Mr. Booth they wished to see, he informed them that that gentleman had remained in the theatre until a late hour hoping the audience would hear what he had to submit to them, as he flattered himself it would have been satisfactory to every one. Disappointed and overwhelmed with affliction at having incurred their displeasure, he had gone home and was now in bed. 'Then bring him forward,' some voices exclaimed. That, Mr. Fawcett did not hesitate to say, would be a cruelty. Harassed

as his feelings were, to call him from his bed at that late hour to appear before them, was what he thought no person could seriously require. As far as respected himself, he (Mr. F.) felt called upon to explain the conduct of the proprietors. The question between them and the managers of the other theatre was now reduced to a point of law. That decision, he trusted, the public would be content to wait for, and by it the managers must abide. Cries were raised of 'No shelving,' 'No Wolves,' 'Booth forever,' etc., etc. And the house was slowly cleared, and did not entirely close till twelve o'clock."

It having become generally known that Mr. Rae of Drury Lane Theatre was present in the stage box of Covent Garden on the night of the riot, his appearance there was severely commented upon. In a letter to the public, he acknowledges his presence, but disclaims having gone there to assist the opposition against Mr. Booth. He says, —

"I went there officially, by the acquiescence and sanction of the sub-committee, for the purpose (if Mr. Booth expressed any intention of returning to his duty at Drury Lane, which was not totally unexpected) of expressing their sentiments on the subject, and of generally explaining their motives and conduct, in answer to any attack that might have been made from any quarter of the theatre. . . .

"Your humble servant,

"J. RAE.

"March 2d, 1817."

The manager of Covent Garden, in a politely cutting

letter, replied to this portion of Mr. Rae's communication: —

". . . Mr. Rae, by his own showing, came into the boxes with an intent to address the audience, if an opportunity had offered, not of his own free-will, but sent by the sub-committee of Drury Lane. . . . The town must surely think it indecent, and highly disrespectful to them, for one theatre to send persons into the other to interfere. I believe no such commission would ever be offered to me by the proprietors of Covent Garden, but I am free to confess, if such should be attempted, I would resist the mandate at all hazards; for if I appeared in the lower boxes of Drury Lane for the purpose of addressing or disturbing the audience, I should expect what I should be convinced I deserved, — to be turned out with contempt.

"Your very humble servant,

"JOHN FAWCETT."

A fierce newspaper war raged, many written apologies appeared with Mr. Booth's name surreptitiously used in order to allay the disturbance, and evidently to protect the theatres from the mob. These false prints, with that cringing style which he would never have condescended to adopt, served only to increase the intensity of his distress; for both physically and mentally he was wearing the sharp thorns of ambition, yet,

> "When Fortune means to men most good,
> She looks upon them with a threatening eye."

This period of intense theatrical excitement proved

also a week of vital importance to the interests of the community at large, as it witnessed the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

On Monday, 24th of February, 1817, the sub-committee of Drury Lane Theatre filed a bill in chancery against Mr. Junius Booth and the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre for an injunction to restrain Mr. Booth from acting at any other theatre than at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

On Tuesday, 25th, upon the humble petition of the plaintiffs, their bill was dismissed out of the court upon their paying the whole of the costs.

On Saturday, 1st of March, Mr. Booth again performed *Richard* to an overflowing house at Covent Garden. His entrance awakened the most rapturous cheering mingled with hisses; wreaths and bouquets, and boughs of laurel fell around him, which elicited groans and hootings from his enemies. A paper was thrown from the pit containing a desire for him to explain and apologize. It was read by him and responded to immediately:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen, — I have endeavored all in my power to atone for the disappointment to which I was instrumental in another place. I have apologized for my conduct on that occasion, and endeavored to explain the circumstances under which that conduct was influenced. I now again most humbly and sincerely repeat my apology."

The play then continued, frequently interrupted by shouts and hisses, and at the close he was called for by general acclamation. Mr. Fawcett appeared, and

announced a repetition of the performance on the following Monday. The admiration excited by Mr. Booth's unquestioned ability, his youthful appearance, and dignified bearing, tended greatly to allay the storm of opposition, and on the 3d and 6th of March he repeated *Richard* to overflowing houses.

The *London Morning Herald*, March 3, 1817, said, —

"The blockade of all the avenues leading to the place in which Mr. Booth was to appear on Saturday was formed at an early hour in the afternoon; and the instant the doors opened the theatre was filled in every part. The struggle for places was desperate in the extreme; several persons must have been considerably hurt in the contests which took place, and hundreds, when they had at last got sight of the door which they desired to enter, were requited for all the inconveniences to which they had subjected themselves by the intelligence that the house was full to an overflow. The audience were no sooner assembled than the cry of 'Booth forever' resounded from all parts of the pit, the occupants of which stood on the benches. This was answered by the call of 'No Booth,' and the parties immediately joined issue and tried if strength or goodwill would gain the victory. As a sort of overture of clapping and hissing was performed, a person in the pit raised a placard bearing the words, 'He has been punished enough, let us forgive him.' The females in the pit were but few, but many ladies of distinction and fashionable appearance seemed disposed to lend their aid in favor of Mr. Booth, and they were joined by

the great majority of the audience. Several placards were at different times hoisted with inscriptions: 'The pit forgives him,' 'No persecution,' 'We pardon him,' 'No playing in London for three years,' 'Booth has done enough to appease John Bull,' 'No Booth,' 'Booth forever,' 'Turn out the Wolves,' 'Beware, the artillery of Drury Lane is in Covent Garden,' 'No hirelings from Drury Lane.' These riotous exclamations and placards produced a tumult inconceivably great. But it was not all noise. The aching bones of many a participator in the riot can testify that there was frequently something more substantial; as in most cases, so in this, where

> 'Each alike with passion glows,
> Words come first and after — blows.'

"Mr. Booth's printed address had been posted in the theatre, and copies distributed through the pit and gallery, so that there was no attempt made to speak from the stage, but not a syllable of the opening scene of 'Richard' could be heard. Oranges and peel were thrown on the stage, and as Mr. Booth came forward laurels were forwarded to the proscenium. He bowed humbly, and in gathering himself to give the first soliloquy, the rapid transition from the modest actor to the exaltation of the stern tyrant, that strange entering into another's individuality, was eminently striking, and gained the wildest applause. In the next scene Mr. Fawcett attempted to address the audience, but silence was as far off as ever; and although the majority were eager to hear him, the riotous minority were again vic-

torious, and the manager was compelled to retire unheard.

"A quarrel broke out in the upper tier of boxes, and some offensive persons were ejected. Another party of Wolves, as they were designated, forced themselves into the already crowded space, and a battle royal was the result. When the furious disturbers were put out, they vented their wrath by thundering at the doors of the boxes with their sticks. Later in the evening a paper was passed to Mr. Booth on the stage, and at length he was allowed to speak, but was almost unheard. There was no abatement of the tumult during the third act of the play, and at the close of the tragedy Mr. Booth was loudly called for; he came forward with Mr. Fawcett, preceded by a person bearing a placard intended to express the feelings of Mr. Booth. 'I have acted wrong, I have made an apology, and thrown myself on the candor of Englishmen.' This aroused the friends of Mr. Booth to renewed efforts on his behalf; they hailed this last attempt of their favorite to conciliate the public mind with vociferous cheers, and at least seven eighths of the audience were with them. Handkerchiefs waved in prodigious numbers from every part of the house, but the noise of the malcontents was as clamorous as ever. Mr. Booth seemed utterly overcome by the efforts he had made, and physically exhausted he left the stage, having received this last demonstration of good-will in a prolonged three times three, amid the virulent howlings of the opposition. Mr. Fawcett was then called for, and interpreting the call for the usual announcement of the play for the

succeeding night, he merely suggested that he supposed such was the request, when cries of 'Yes, yes,'—'Booth,' '*Richard*'—responded. Amid shouts of applause and hisses the fatiguing experience of that evening ended."

So great a likeness between Kean and Booth was naturally turned to account by the detractors of the younger actor. In stature and appearance the resemblance was striking; the faces of both were pre-eminently handsome, of classical regularity and possessing great mobility of feature. Their temperament was similar, both being impulsive and energetic, copying nature with rigid truthfulness, and having that intensity of feeling by which the actor is merged in the character he represents. This complete abandonment of individuality, the surest trait of innate genius, was the distinguishing peculiarity of each, consequently both naturally adopted the same style of acting, founded on that of Cooke, yet possessing all the chaste and classical embodiments of the Kemble school. This similarity of temperament can explain that unavoidable sameness of taste and production, frequently evinced by poets, painters, and actors, more clearly than any argument which can be used to disprove the charge of imitation.

Hazlitt, after acknowledging that Mr. Booth gave the tent scene in "Richard" better than he had ever seen it rendered, because "he was himself, and natural," adds: "Mr. Booth pleased us much more as *Iago* than as *Richard*. He was, it is true, well supported by Mr. Kean as *Othello*, but he also supported him better in

that character than any one else we have seen play with him. The two rival actors hunt very well in couples." Again he notes: "Mr. Booth has two voices, — he is of the chameleon quality — capable of reflecting all objects that come in contact with him." He accuses him of possessing his own voice, which he confesses "wants neither strength nor musical expression, but we also occasionally caught the mellow tones of Macready rising out of the thorough-bass of Kean's guttural emphasis." Sparingly and grudgingly does this critic mete out his crumbs of praise to him whom he called "Kean's fell opposite"; and again, with a timid seriousness, that is as ludicrous as sarcastic, he notices his existence as "a gentleman by the name of Booth."

Mr. Booth played *Richard III.* and *Sir Giles Overreach* alternately, until March 15th, when "Cymbeline" was produced, with Booth as *Posthumus*, Young as *Iachimo*, and Kemble as *Polydore*. The following, on his rendition of *Posthumus*, are among the numerous flattering criticisms of the day: —

"On Saturday Mr. Booth assumed a new character, — that of *Leonatus Posthumus* in the play of 'Cymbeline.' As this is a part in which Mr. Kean has not been seen on the London stage, considerable curiosity was excited among those who only give Mr. Booth credit for successful imitation, and the theatre was filled at an early hour to witness what was considered by them his first great attempt on his own account. It was not, however, with such a feeling that we repaired thither; we have been satisfied that Mr. Booth had real

talent, and as the resemblance between these two actors was never proved to consist in a close copy of particular passages, a general imitation of style was as easy to be transferred to *Posthumus* as to any other character. That there is a resemblance, a striking resemblance, cannot be denied; but as Nature has done much towards accomplishing this, we cannot see that one actor in his style ought to be treated with scorn whilst another is praised to the skies. The stage has its fashions. Success governs taste. In *Posthumus* Mr. Booth lost none of the reputation he had already acquired. Many passages he gave with great and appropriate energy, some with much dignity, and several in a tone of sarcasm, that told with great effect. Among those last alluded to we particularly admired the following reply to *Iachimo:* —

"'Your Italy contains none so accomplished a courtier, to convince the honor of my mistress; if in the holding or loss of that, you term her frail, I do nothing doubt you have store of thieves; notwithstanding, I fear not my ring.'

"In the scene where *Iachimo* convinces him of the frailty of *Imogen,* he made some powerful appeals to feeling, and was rewarded with thunders of applause; occasionally, however, there was a coarseness attendant on his vigor which it should be his study to dismiss. The want of importance we complained of in his *Iago* sometimes attached to his *Posthumus.* This was particularly felt in the last scene, from the awkwardly retired silence he thought proper to take, which was such as completely to *shelve* him (if we may be allowed the

expression) till the moment when he discovered himself to *Iachimo*. His subsequent exertions were not only perfectly satisfactory, but finely effective; and he closed his performance amidst vociferous applause."

"In his impassioned scenes, even in the height of grief, of rage, of jealousy, and despair, he never oversteps the bounds of nature. Nothing can be finer than his acting those scenes of torture which occur in the character of *Posthumus;* and his delivery of the last speech in that character is in the highest degree natural and impressive; but we shall be more struck with his merits when we consider the common defects from which he is exempt. He has no measured cadences, no unnatural pauses, no affectation, no vulgarisms of speech, no quaint inflections, which even the best actors are so apt to fall into.

"His emphasis is seldom wrong; he never overacts his part; his representation is always natural, and if he be sometimes wanting in grace, or propriety of attitude, there is no dry stiffness of manner, — he is at least easy, and it is only wonderful that his faults should be so trifling and so sure of amendment. Indeed, to dwell on such blemishes in an actor of one-and-twenty would be like criticising the figure of a passing cloud; before we can trace its outline, no trace of it remains."

The following letter is from the pen of the celebrated William Godwin, father-in-law of Shelley and author of "Caleb Williams": —

SKINNER STREET, Feb. 27, 1817.

SIR, — I witnessed your performance of *Richard* and *Iago*, and you may perhaps not be displeased with re-

ceiving hints and remarks from a person of old experience in matters of taste and literature. With your *Richard* I was not altogether pleased. You got through it with too much bustle, activity, and energy, and were rewarded with almost unexampled applause; but it appeared to me a representation rather of promise than of that full conception and meditation I long for in a performer.

Your *Iago* struck me very differently, — I mean in the third act of the play, for the rest was not excellent. I have seen Garrick and most of the performers of the last age, but I confess that on that evening I saw something new. I never before saw a scene in which two male performers fairly divided the crown, and so completely kept up the ball between them, as to produce all the best effects of illusion. Your tones of insinuation, in particular when you infuse the poison of jealousy into *Othello*, were so true that, by my faith, I felt "this tale might have won my credit too." I immediately became impressed with the persuasion, this Booth will make a real actor! I set down these things because, as you are a very young man, they may be of use to you. But I should not have troubled you with this letter were it not for the particular situation in which you now stand. You have incurred the displeasure of the common frequenters of the theatre. I know not how the contest may terminate, but I write earnestly to recommend to you not to be cast down if the event be unfavorable. I shall be the loser if this brutal outcry drives you from the London stage, but *you* will not be the loser. The whole British dominions

will be before you, which you may visit with undiminished fame. You are not driven from us for any defect in your profession. The shortness of your career will only have rendered it more illustrious in the eyes of the inhabitants of distant parts. You will be what in your profession is technically called a *star;* and country-playing, under such circumstances, is, I believe, more profitable than playing in London. You will then return to us, after a year or two, improved in your profession, and unanimously and rapturously welcomed, even by those persons who are now most eager in exploding you. I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,

WILLIAM GODWIN.

It is a received opinion, but an erroneous one, that these occurrences banished Mr. Booth from the London stage. On the contrary, he successfully pursued his engagement at Covent Garden, and afterward played frequently at other city theatres. While his fault was insignificant in itself, it was of moment to his detractors, as the riots materially injured him in a professional view, although the result created a longing for a wider field of action.

Mr. Booth had many offers, from provincial managers, for the Passion Week, but preferred Woolwich, where he played *Richard III.*, *Bertram*, *Othello*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*. From a Woolwich correspondent to a London morning paper, the following is taken :—

"Mr. Booth was received by a full and elegant auditory. In the character of *Sir Giles* his claims to emi-

nence were not only not equivocal, but fully established. In the last act more particularly his astonishingly striking display of the variedly agonized and frantic feelings with which *Sir Giles* is agitated at the failure of his schemes, came home to the feelings of all, and reiterated plaudits spoke the approbation of a crowded theatre."

On the 31st of March, 1817, Mr. Booth performed *Richard III.* at Woolwich; on the 3d of April, *Othello;* and on Saturday, the 19th of April, he played *Sir Edward Mortimer* in three different towns. At eleven A. M. he played at Cirencester, at four P. M. in Gloucester, and at eight o'clock in Cheltenham. For this arduous achievement he received about thirty pounds. This provincial tour ended on the 13th of December.

On the 7th of April, 1818, he played at Stratford-on-Avon.

This lovely little town — so admired by the tourist, so universally sought by scholar, poet, and divine — has ever been a spot of peculiar reverence to the actor. With more than ordinary tenderness he esteems the privilege of standing on this soil as a portion of his birthright. The air to him is filled with images of various plays, more weird and fantastic than visions of Walpurgis Night; his mind teems with well-known passages, while quotations apt and beautiful fall from his tongue, and he feels what a glorious honor has been bequeathed his particular art, not alone by the life-long devotion of one immortal mind, but also by the proud assurance that *Shakspere* was an *actor!*

It was solely for the peculiar pleasure of performing

in this place of rare remembrances, that Mr. Booth was induced (as, doubtless, others have similarly been influenced) to personate the characters of *Richard* and *Shylock* in the little theatre at Stratford. To a mind so peculiarly attuned to melancholy as his, how impressive must have been the solemn grandeur of that sacred edifice where the Immortal Poet lies! —

We enter the holy of holies;
Pause here, —
For this is the high-priest of Nature,
Shakspere!
We cannot define the full feeling
Our innermost spirit revealing,
And baffling all art of concealing.

Not the sanctity power has left
O'er the place, —
Dust will all grandeur despoil
And erase, —
But the creatures his pencil has wrought,
And the wisdom his genius has taught,
Will live while the mind holds a thought.

Man's heart was the book Nature gave
To her son;
And time has attested the work
Nobly done.
Though ages have passed since his birth,
Two worlds are recounting his worth,
And hail him the monarch of earth.

Mr. Booth appeared for the first time as *Sir Edward Mortimer* in the play of "The Iron Chest," at Covent Garden Theatre; the subjoined criticism records the event, under date of 13th April, 1817.

" . . . Relieved from the necessity of making a comparison, which might appear invidious, we have only to remark on the performance of Mr. Booth, without at all referring to the exertions of his rival, at the other house. These, however, are so fresh in the memory of the town, as completely successful, that it requires no common skill in the actor to gain a moderate portion of public favor. But the genius and good fortune of Mr. Booth triumph over all common obstacles, and open for him an easy path to fame, where the steep ascent would deter others from the attempt. His exertions last night as *Sir Edward* added largely to the reputation which he had previously acquired; and if in the opinion of some they proved him to be master of great imitative powers, they satisfied every impartial judge that he was the possessor of great original talent. The fierce emotion, the angry suspicion, the terrible remorse of the murderer, who aspires to rise superior to guilt, and claim a spotless name, were depicted generally with great felicity, and in some instances with an awful fidelity to nature. His scene with *Wilford*, in which he reveals the secret of his shame, was particularly effective. The energy, resentment, and despair which prompt this disclosure were finely marked, and the stern resolution consequent upon it was portrayed with the hand of a master. At the close of the play his efforts were not less fortunate. The confusion and horror growing out of the fatal discovery which results from his new but imperfect crime were happily blended with the remorse and agony which returning love for the innocent object of his persecution failed not to in-

spire. He happily imagined and successfully executed the conflicting emotions which riot in the bosom of *Sir Edward*, obtained the sympathy and commiseration of the audience, and retired amidst thunders of applause."

In July, 1818, Mr. Booth made his first appearance in Glasgow and in Edinburgh, in which cities he played successful engagements. He visited nearly all the principal provincial towns, and reappeared in London in the fall of the year at Covent Garden Theatre, where he repeatedly performed *Richard* and *Iago*. He imitated the attempt of a foreign actor and played *Shylock* in the Jewish dialect; and although Mr. Booth was familiar with Hebrew, it is not positively known now whether he spoke occasionally in that language or played his part in Hebrew throughout. He gave this performance on the 17th of September, during the autumn engagement at Covent Garden, which terminated on the 4th of November, 1818. After acting in several of the English towns he proceeded to Dublin, where he played eight nights most successfully, notwithstanding it was the Lenten season. His share of the receipts amounted to one hundred and four pounds. He visited, on his return, Bridgenorth, Newport, Scarborough, Beverly, York, etc.; and at some of the towns included in this tour the receipt of one pound is marked for the performance of *Sir Edward Mortimer* and *Jerry Sneak*.

The Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres for years had possessed the exclusive privilege of producing Shaksperian plays, by a patent conferred upon them by the crown. The minor theatres, although conducted with as much liberality as their more favored rivals, were obliged to confine themselves to melodrama.

But the exclusive monopoly of the Immortal Bard by the patent theatres was often disputed by the Transpontine houses, which in their production of Shakspere's plays resorted to the introduction of melodramatic music, and sundry alterations and curtailments, thereby avoiding the strict letter of the law. Mr. Booth broke through the established rules by performing *Richard III.* at the Coburg Theatre, in December, 1819, for six successive nights, and *Horatius* on the following seven.

The run of this piece was interrupted by the death of the Duke of Kent, in respect to whose memory the theatre was closed on Jan. 24, 1820. Upon its reopening Mr. Booth performed *Brutus* in the "Fall of Tarquin" for five consecutive nights, when all amusements were again interrupted by the death of George the Third. During the month of March he visited Aberdeen, and returned to London to resume his engagement at the Coburg, which theatre opened on Easter Monday, April 3d, with the "Crusaders" and a pantomime. On the 6th, Mr. Harris, of Covent Garden Theatre, negotiated with Mr. Booth to play *Lear* for six nights.

The tragedy of "Lear" was in especial requisition, having long been removed from the stage by royal command, as the madness of *Lear* was similar to the disorder of the late king. The consent of Mr. Glossop, the Coburg manager, was obtained, and "Lear" was accordingly produced on the 13th of April, 1820, with the following cast: —

Lear	Mr. Booth.
Edgar	Mr. C. Kemble.
Edmund	Mr. W. C. Macready.
Kent	Mr. John Fawcett.
Cordelia	Miss S. Booth.

"Mr. Booth's *Lear* proved one of the proudest efforts of his genius. His execution of this character was transcendently beautiful, and requires no ordinary mind to properly conceive it. The scene in which he is turned out to bide the pelting of the pitiless storm is one of terrific grandeur. How admirably Booth represented the scene, no one who ever witnessed him can forget; and his recitation of the following passage, amidst the storm and darkness, was sublime:—

"'Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples!
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head.'"

Lear was represented three nights a week for several successive weeks. In consequence of the injunction laid against the minor theatres, prohibiting them from playing the tragedy proper, Mr. Glossop brought out "Lear of Private Life," a piece constructed on "Father and Daughter," a tale by Mrs. Opie. Mr. Glossop effected an engagement with Mr. Booth to play *Fitzarden* in this piece three nights a week, being the "off nights" of his engagement at Covent Garden. He played the part fifty-three times; and for his benefit on the 29th of May, 1820, "The Medusa's Wreck" was

performed, a scene from "Lear in Private Life," and the new pantomime of "Fortunio." He visited Norwich, Rochester, and Maidstone, playing a few nights in each place; and on the 25th of July he opened at Cheltenham, where he acted five nights, and one night at Gloucester. He then took the stage-coach for Ludlow. His memoranda of this date contain the following note: "A lady alone and apparently friendless expired in the coach; the scene was very touching; we carried her for six miles; the remembrance sadly affected my acting that night, for the suddenness of death completely unnerved me. Played *Octavian* and *Bertram* badly."

In August Edmund Kean personated "a round of characters" previous to his departure for America, and Mr. Booth appeared at Drury Lane with him, enacting *Iago* to his *Othello*, *Edgar* to his *Lear*, and *Pierre* to his *Jaffier*. In October Mr. Booth played in Reading, going thence to Weymouth, and other places, reappearing at Drury Lane, under Elliston's management, on the 4th of November. He acted *Lear* several times, as well as *Opechancanough*, an Indian chief, in an American drama; and went through a range of characters successfully. The play of "Julius Cæsar" was also produced, with Booth as *Cassius*, James W. Wallack as *Brutus*, and John Cooper as *Marc Antony*, — all of them appearing for the first time in these parts.

This engagement closed on the 13th of January, 1821. On the 18th of this month he married Mary Anne Holmes, at the residence of the Hon. Mrs. Chambers, who had always manifested a great interest

in Mr. Booth's career, and who presented his wife on her wedding-day with those well-known jewels which afterwards decorated his *Richard's* crown.

Mr. and Mrs. Booth made a brief visit to France, stopping at Calais and Boulogne, and on their return to England he decided to visit the West Indies professionally. They sailed from Deal, at which place he purchased a piebald pony named Peacock, to which he had become much attached, and who in after years was closely identified with him in his occupation as a farmer.

The vessel was obliged to stop at the island of Madeira, and, attracted by the loveliness of the scenery, he was induced to pass a portion of his time in surveying its beauties. They remained for several weeks at Madeira; and as horses were exceedingly rare on the island (oxen and mules being used on the mountains to carry freight), Peacock created great excitement. Sums of money were offered for him, but Mr. Booth declined to part with his new favorite. In ascending the mountain to visit a Carmelite convent, Mrs. Booth was carried in a palanquin by natives, who set down their burthen at the sound of the Angelus bell. Her surprise was great at observing her husband cross himself and pray with them. At the convent Mrs. Booth did not understand the conversation between her husband and the fathers, it being in Latin, but she afterward learned that he was invited by the Prior to attend the midnight burial of a Carmelite, for which purpose he ascended the mountain again and alone.

In April he took passage for himself, wife, and pony in the schooner "Two Brothers," for America.

As Mr. and Mrs. Booth were the only passengers on the vessel, the captain resigned his cabin for their accommodation, and after a tedious voyage of forty-four days they landed at Norfolk, Va., on the 30th of June, 1821. On his arrival, Mr. Booth introduced himself to Mr. Charles Gilfert, manager of the Richmond Theatre, and an engagement was immediately effected. He opened on the 6th of July in Richmond, Va., in the character of *Richard III.*

The effect of a long sea-voyage and the excitement of playing before a new audience rendered him somewhat tame during the first acts, but his fire and energy in the closing scenes delighted the manager and electrified the house. Notwithstanding his coming thus unheralded into a strange country, in the sultriest season of the year, and appearing with all the disadvantages of strange surroundings, he won the most eloquent praise from critics and audience.

Of his *Richard III.* the *Richmond Examiner* said, —

"Gentlemen who have seen Cooke in this part do not hesitate to pronounce Booth superior to *him*, and others who have lately seen Kean in the same character aver that in some scenes he is equal, and in others, the most trying of the play, superior to that celebrated actor."

He performed four nights, and proved a decided acquisition, as the business of the theatre was at a very low ebb. The characters he personated were *Richard*, *Lear*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, and *Bertram*. Later he entered into a contract with Messrs. Gilfert and Graham

to act throughout the Union for a specified nightly sum.

In a recent publication Manager Ludlow gives the following account of Mr. Booth's first appearance in Petersburg, Va.: —

"During the month of August, 1821, one of the brightest 'stars' in the Western dramatic horizon presented itself in the person of Junius Brutus Booth, — *the* Booth, — who, accompanied by his wife, arrived at Norfolk, Virginia, in a vessel from the island of Madeira. Why he came to the United States at the time and in the way he did, unheralded and unknown, I have never been informed. He presented himself to Mr. Gilfert, the Richmond manager, and said he wished to perform in that city. I understood he had no letters of introduction, and there were some doubts whether he was the real Booth or some impudent adventurer, who, having heard that Mr. Booth contemplated visiting America, took this peculiar way of introducing himself, and, if possible, 'humbugging' the Yankees before the real Booth should arrive. The Richmond manager, always ready for some bold and unusual adventure, arranged with Mr. Booth for one night, and a conditional extension of the engagement. Mr. Booth made his first appearance in the United States there and at that time in 'Richard III.' Mr. Richard Russell, who was acting as manager of the Petersburg theatre, in the absence of Mr. Caldwell, happened to hear of the appearance of a Mr. Booth in Richmond, and went to that city to ascertain who the person was, assuming that name, and came back highly pleased with the man, saying he had

engaged him to play one night in Petersburg, then to finish his engagement in Richmond, and return to Petersburg for a number of nights. He had selected 'Richard III.' for his first appearance in Petersburg. The play was cast, and put up in the green-room, and the night on which it was to be performed stated. On the morning of the day set apart, the large bills posted on the corners of the streets announced 'the first appearance of the great tragedian, J. B. Booth, from the London theatres, — Covent Garden and Drury Lane.' The play was called for rehearsal at ten o'clock, A. M. At the proper time the rehearsal commenced, but without Mr. Booth. He had not arrived; but the manager said the rehearsal must go on, and he would have Mr. Booth's scenes rehearsed after he arrived. I think they had reached the fourth act of the play, and I was sauntering near the head of the stairs that led up to the stage, when a small man that I took to be a well-grown boy of about sixteen years of age, came running up the stairs, wearing a roundabout jacket and a cheap straw hat, both covered with dust, and inquired for the stage-manager. I pointed across the stage to Mr. Russell, who at that moment had observed the person with whom I was conversing, and hurried toward us, and, cordially grasping the hand of the strange man, said, 'Ah! Mr. Booth, I am glad you have arrived; we were fearful something serious had happened to you.' I do not think any man was ever more astonished than I was just then in beholding this meeting. Is it possible this can be the great Mr. Booth, that Mr. Russell says is 'undoubtedly the best actor living'? and I be-

gan to think Russell was trying to put off some joke upon us all. I observed, however, that when the small man came upon the stage to rehearse his scenes, he was quite 'at home,' and showed a knowledge of the business of the character that a mere novice or pretender could not have acquired. He ran through the rehearsal very carelessly, gave very few special or peculiar directions, tried the combat of the last act over twice, and said, 'That will do,' and the rehearsal was over. He then told Mr. Russell that he had been a few minutes too late for the stage-coach that had left Richmond early in the morning. And that he soon after started on foot, and had walked all the way, — twenty-five miles; that his wardrobe had been sent to the stage-office before he was up; had been taken by the coach, and, he supposed, was ready in the city for the proper claimant.

"When the curtain rose at night, all the company were on the alert to see the supposed great actor make his entrance before the audience. When the proper scene opened, Mr. Booth walked on the stage, made no recognition of the reception applause, and, in an apparently meditative mood, began the soliloquy of 'Now is the Winter of our discontent,' which he delivered with seeming indifference, and with little if any point, something after the manner of a schoolboy repeating a lesson of which he had learned the words, but was heedless of their meaning; and then made his exit, without receiving any additional applause. I was not where I could ascertain the impression made upon the audience, but on the stage, at the side scenes, the actors were looking at each other in all kinds of ways,

expressive of astonishment and disgust. I was standing near Mr. Benton, an old actor, — the *King Henry* of the evening, — and as I turned to go away, he said, 'What do you think of him, Mr. Ludlow?' 'Think,' I replied, 'why, I think, as I thought before, that he is an impostor! What do *you* think of him?' 'Why, sir,' said Benton, 'if the remainder of his *Richard* should prove like the beginning, I have never yet, I suppose, seen the character played, for it is unlike any I ever saw; it may be very good, but I don't fancy it.' I found that among the company, generally, a like estimate of the great man prevailed, Mr. Russell being the only exception; he, having witnessed Mr. Booth's acting at Richmond, still persisted in saying he was the greatest actor he had ever seen. His scene with *Lady Anne*, where he encounters and interrupts the funeral procession of *King Henry VI.*, was as tame and pointless as his first soliloquy. I had seen George Frederick Cooke perform *Richard III.*, about ten years prior to the time that I saw Mr. Booth first, at which period I was a youth of sixteen years of age, when impressions are vivid and lasting, and I had retained a perfect recollection of the effects Mr. Cooke produced on the audience, myself included; and it seemed to me that no great actor would pass through these two scenes with that careless indifference that Mr. Booth evinced. It has ever remained a mystery to me why Mr. Booth always slighted the first two acts of 'Richard III.'; and I can only account for it on the supposition that it was with the view of reserving his powers for the remaining three acts, in which considerable physical as well as

mental efforts are required. And yet, when I first met Mr. Booth, he did not appear to be deficient in physique. I retained my first impression of Mr. Booth until he came to the fourth act, where, in a scene with *Buckingham*, he hints at the murder of the young princes. Then I thought I discovered something worthy of a great actor. From that on, his acting was unique and wonderful. I had never seen any one produce such effects, and come so near my ideas of the character, — not even Mr. Cooke, who was as far below Mr. Booth in the last two acts as he was above him in the first three. When the curtain fell upon the finishing of the play, there was a burst of applause from audience and actors such as I will venture to say Petersburg never knew before, nor has known since. After this one night's performance Mr. Booth returned to Richmond, finished his engagement there, and then came again to Petersburg, and played six or eight nights to crowded and delighted audiences.

"I hope that the reader will not think me tedious or over-enthusiastic if I relate something more in regard to this gentleman, who, I have long considered, was one of the great lights of the stage, until age and infirmities impaired his faculties. On Mr. Booth's return to Petersburg he commenced his engagement with Colman's play of the 'Iron Chest,' in which he performed the character of *Sir Edward Mortimer*, and I had the pleasure of playing with him his secretary, *Wilford;* and here let me state an effect produced on me at that time which half a century has not been able to obliterate, and that will keep its place 'while memory holds

a seat in this distracted globe.' In the play there is a scene where *Sir Edward* attempts to disclose to *Wilford* a secret which he had kept securely from the world for years, — a murder for which he had been tried and acquitted, and at the trial the course of justice had been disturbed by cries of 'Innocent!' ere the verdict had been declared. In this scene the struggle between his pride and shame, from the necessity of making this youth, *Wilford*, — his secretary, the creature of his bounty, — the depository of this astounding secret, was so terrifically wrought up and so magnificently portrayed that I was brought to a 'standstill' upon the stage, in wonderment of the man's great tragic powers, and only recovered my self-possession when Mr. Booth said, in an undertone, 'Go on, go on!' I never had such an effect produced on me by any other person's acting in the whole course of my dramatic career. Mr. Booth had at that time the finest stage face I ever met with; its splendid contour had not been marred by the breaking of what is commonly called the 'bridge of the nose,' and his eyes, of which he made great use in acting, were brilliant and expressive, — as *Hamlet* says, 'an eye like Mars, to threaten and command.'"

On his second visit to Petersburg Mr. Booth acted six nights to numerous and delighted audiences, then retired to a country-place to enjoy a respite from fatigue. He lived at a roadside inn between Richmond and Petersburg, where many travellers were in the habit of tarrying over night. One evening, Mr. Booth overheard the landlord commanding the waiter

to "get the new lodger's boots," — referring to a fresh arrival who had retired early and thereby caused suspicion in the mind of the wary host. The boy returned with the answer, "The gentleman says he has no boots." "Go up at once," replied the landlord, "and demand his *shoes*." The boy came back and stated in dismay, "The gentleman says he has no shoes." The landlord now became much excited, upon which Mr. Booth inquired why he was so anxious to obtain the lodger's boots. "Why, sir," the host replied confusedly, "we have strange characters stop here sometimes, who have a way of rising early in the morning and walking off before any of the family are astir; so I manage to get possession of their boots, and they are compelled to remain until their bills are settled."

The host and his family assuring themselves of the evil intentions of the "footpad," as they designated the unconscious lodger, were exceedingly anxious in watching his movements. In the morning the person who had been the cause of so many dark surmises made his appearance at the breakfast table, and, to the astonishment of Mr. Booth, he proved to be the distinguished tragedian, Thomas Cooper.

Mr. Booth returned to Richmond in September, and fulfilled a second engagement, which proved more lucrative than the one of the preceding summer.

On the 2d of October, 1821, he arrived in New York, where he was immediately engaged by the manager of the Park Theatre, and announced to play *Richard* on the 5th. From the numerous allusions of the press, the following is copied: —

"The notoriety of Mr. Booth in London (and from the various reports of our friends who had seen him there) had greatly excited public curiosity. In consequence, a full and fashionable audience assembled at an early hour on Friday evening, to witness his début. He was welcomed by three long distinct rounds of applause, and we could perceive he was embarrassed and sensibly affected. When we reflect upon Mr. Booth's youth, and the effect produced by his acting, we cannot withhold from him our highest praise. In the tent scene he showed much originality; rising from the couch, he dashed to the bottom of the stage, and with an attitude and expression of countenance we cannot describe, and will not forget, but which was neither that of Cooke, Cooper, Kean, nor Wallack, he made an extraordinary and most sensible impression on the audience. There was at first a pause, which suddenly burst forth into a long and rapturous applause, intermixed with loud expressions of approbation. In the contest with Richmond, and the dying scene, he was loudly applauded, and fell amidst the cries of 'Bravo! Bravo!'"

At that time there were but two regular theatres in New York, the Park and the Bowery. "Stars" were generally engaged by managers for the limited space of six nights, and rarely prolonged the engagement beyond twelve. The repetition of standard plays for a great number of nights consecutively, so common in our age, was entirely unknown by the "Old Park" patrons nearly half a century ago.

On the occasion of Mr. Booth's first benefit in New York he appeared as *Hamlet* and as *Jerry Sneak*, in

the old farce of "Mayor of Garratt." The *New York Post* of the ensuing day contained the following notice: —

"At the close of the afterpiece there was an unanimous cry for Mr. Booth, scarcely an individual leaving either pit or boxes, but waited for his change of dress; he then appeared amid the shouts and huzzas of a delighted audience. The young stranger was so evidently embarrassed at the unexpected compliment, that he was almost unable to speak, and addressed the audience in a voice so low that we were unable to hear all he said. We understood him, however, to say that he was overwhelmed with gratitude; he knew not how to express the feelings which their kindness and liberality had inspired; he was unaccustomed on such occasions to address an audience; he did not expect the honor would have been extended to him; he never should and never could forget it. This agitation evidently increasing, he bowed to the audience and retired amidst thundering applause, leaving behind him impressions not a little improved by the modesty of his deportment."

From New York Mr. Booth went South, acting in Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, New Orleans, and Savannah; his travels through many of the Southern States being an ovation. It is rumored that he frequently expressed a desire "to retire from public life and keep a lighthouse." That he seriously contemplated such a step is shown by the annexed copy of a memorandum of his own dated February 12, 1822.

"Spoke to Mr. Blount, collector of customs, and one

of the passengers, about Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. He offered it to me with the dwelling-house, and twenty acres of land attached; and a salary of $300 per annum, for keeping the light, — government providing oil and cotton, — a quart of oil per diem. Grapes, water-melons, cabbages, potatoes, carrots, and onions grow in abundance there. Rain-water the only drink; a cistern on the premises for that purpose. Abundance of fish and wild fowl; — pigs, cows, and horses find good pasture. Soil too light for wheat or corn. Flour bought for four or five dollars a barrel. The office is for life, and only taken away through misbehavior. Lighthouse seventy-five feet high; light requires trimming every night at twelve o'clock. *No taxes whatever.* Firewood is procured from the pieces of wreck found on the shoals. One dollar per day is the charge for men who assist in cases of wreck. Strawberries, currant-bushes, and apple-trees should be taken there; also a plough, spades, and chest of carpenter tools. *Pine* tables the best. Mr. Blount is to write me word if the office can be given me in April next, from his seat at Washington, North Carolina."

It may hardly be necessary to add that he did not obtain the situation of "lighthouse-keeper," owing, as was eventually disclosed, to the timely interference of theatrical managers, who were loath to suffer the total eclipse of so brilliant a star. Although his disposition was ever humble and retiring, it is singular that in the zenith of his fame and with such glowing prospects of fortune, he should have contemplated a life of hardship and comparative poverty as more conducive to happiness.

He now made his first appearance in Boston, and the event is thus spoken of in Clapp's "Record of the Boston Stage":—

"The first appearance of this great actor in Boston, where for so many years he has attracted those most conversant with the different schools of acting, and has delighted elsewhere the most critical audiences in the world by his masterly impersonations, occurred on the 6th of May, 1822. He made his appearance as *Richard*, a character which he is identified with wherever he has performed. His acting then received the applause of a Boston audience, and up to his last appearance in this city, prior to his death, he retained the position he so eminently deserved. During his engagement he performed *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Octavian*, and for his benefit, *Hamlet*, on which occasion the receipts were eight hundred dollars. Booth's acting always evinced genius. Like Edmund Kean, there was inspiration in his embodiment of Shaksperian characters, and even when the words were lost to the hearing the eye needed no vocal interpreter, for Booth, more than any actor we have ever seen, possessed the power of combining a meaning in every gesture, and a silent glance was equivalent to a delivered sentence. As a soliloquist he excelled. With many actors all soliloquies seem like so many titlepages to the succeeding acts; but Booth avoided all strains after startling points, and gave to such passages, both in *Hamlet* and *Richard*, an interest without destroying the unity of the play."

In the summer of 1822, while the yellow-fever was

raging in Baltimore, Mr. Booth purchased a farm twenty-five miles from that city, lying in Harford County, Maryland. This place became his constant resort when free from the excitement of his profession, and was the birthplace of his children. It was always known as "The Farm," but was in reality a dense woodland, merging on one side into a great forest, called the "Big Woods," which served as a free hunting-ground on moonlight nights when the whole place was rendered musical by the baying of the hounds and the call of the sportsmen. His uncultivated possessions lay three miles equally distant from three small villages, — Belair, the county town, Hickory, and Churchville, — which were merely hamlets, or stopping-places for travellers in the great wilderness of the district. The rough coach-road to the Farm was made picturesque and delightful in summer by the massive trees which arched it. Along this stony highway the post-boy used to ride once a week, sounding his horn, and tossing the ever-welcome letters and papers over the gate. From the road a crooked, narrow pathway wound to the Booth dwelling, which was set among the trees, a quarter of a mile distant. This was a log-cabin, plastered and whitewashed on the exterior; the small square window-frames, and broad, plain shutters, which, like the doors, never knew the innovation of lock or bolt, were painted red. Four rooms besides the loft, the kitchen, and the Old Dominion chimney, made up a picturesque and comfortable abode, standing in a clearing encompassed by huge oak, black walnut, beech, and tulip trees.

The cabin in its primal state, unpainted and unplastered, had been removed to its present locality across several fields. This proceeding caused great wonderment among the villagers, as every available man, ox, and horse, that could be hired, were in requisition. Much time and money were expended in this undertaking, but its successful accomplishment stamped the owner as a master-mind, and the more fiercely the winter storms raged and the summer tornadoes swept by, the more wise did he appear to those who had predicted the quick demolition of the taut little cabin. This costly removal had been effected on account of a spring of delicious water which Mr. Booth had discovered under the thickest trees. These he would not suffer to be removed, but the old spring was ornamented with granite ledges and steps. In its grateful depths dwelt an immense green bull-frog; and as these creatures are said to live a hundred years, the children of the family used to imagine that he had croaked to the first invaders of his solitude as he did to them. In this shaded spot a little dairy was built, and the thoughtful possessor planted in front of his door a cherry-shoot, anticipating the future when his children should gather under its branches. Those days came in their time, and his tall sons swung themselves up among its great boughs, to read or doze away many a sultry afternoon. Merry groups gossiped under its shelter, little ones danced there, while older ones dreamed, and reared airy castles; the aged mother in her widowhood remembered happier days in its shadows; and every year the orioles and mocking-birds paid their wel-

come visits. This grand old grafted tree was very tall and straight, and shaded the entire lawn.

The Farm was belted by a thick, unbroken circle of native trees as far as the eye could reach; it was completely isolated, and the chief delight of its owner was that it was so perfectly shut in, and away from the world.

An extensive orchard was laid out; barn and stables were erected, and a clumsily constructed cider-press put together, which was worked by the blacks,—nearly all the labor of the farm being done by them. It was the period of picturesque farming, when flails and sieves were used instead of the noisy threshing-machine and the fan. Mr. Booth advocated the use of lime on his fields, and foresaw the time when bone-dust would be applied for manuring purposes. Substantial negro quarters were built, and a valuable vineyard planted; a swimming pond, with its little island covered with willow-trees, and a stream for fish were made by turning the numerous branches of a neighboring brook into their respective beds; the directing mind as well as the readiest hand in all these achievements being "the Massa's."

In a few years a little graveyard was railed in, where the Jewish althea bushes had their places among the yews and weeping-willows. In country homesteads these private graveyards are common, and the duty of reading the burial service devolves upon the master of the house when it is impracticable to obtain a clergyman. Mr. Booth was often called upon to officiate at the interment of members of his household here (the blacks being buried outside the rails).

Mr. Booth, now a farmer in earnest, took a weekly magazine, or paper on farming, which he carefully hung on file, as he did his play-bills. He imported fish for his lakelet, but after a brief time they degenerated and passed away, like the Algonquin Indians, whose war trophies and small arrow-heads or elf-shot were thickly embedded in the soft earth of the forest. The delights of the new strange world to which he had come were minutely described in an old note-book (the pencil writing scarcely legible now), interspersed with passages from plays, memoranda of dresses, properties, and stage directions, births and deaths of children, time and duration of meteors, astronomical data, fast days, and lastly a few verses called "The Son of Alknomook," which it is now impossible to decipher, but which were learned from him in childhood by the writer.

His "library" was placed upon a few shelves, and consisted of volumes of Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats, a Gazetteer of the World, an English and a French Dictionary, Racine, Alfieri, Tasso, Dante, Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Plutarch's Morals and Lives, Milton, Shakspere, the Koran, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, and Paley's Theology.

Three engravings adorned the walls of the single parlor, — "Timon of Athens," "The Roman Matron showing her Husband how to Die," and the "Death of Bonaparte," with these words written in the clouds, "*Tête d'Armée.*" The simple furniture of this humble home was of the roughest kind, but such as would for its antiquity be thought valuable and desirable now. It consisted of a corner cupboard filled with quaint

china, a narrow looking-glass with the upper half bearing a picture of the sun and moon, human faces representing each, tall brass andirons, a high brass fender, and a spinning-wheel; for it was the farmer's pride that all his blankets and woollen goods came from the backs of his own sheep, and were spun at home. An old "Herbalist" hung by the side of the amusing and instructive "Almanack" on the wall; an ink-horn and a bunch of quills, together with little bags of seed and other necessary small articles, were ranged on little hooks around the looking-glass. The round Dutch oven that baked the wholesome bread, and the immense heavy pewter platters from which the simple meals were eaten, and which served in later years as covers to the milk-crocks in the dairy, also the wonderful cradle-baskets for the babies, and many smaller wicker baskets of odd shapes, would now be readily secured as curiosities. Basket-weaving in the long winter evenings was the favorite occupation of "Old Joe," — young Joe then, — a faithful trusted slave to an indulgent master, who hired him to Mr. Booth year after year till both had grown old. Long after the actor had passed away old Joe, until his own death, remained in the service of the Booth family.

There were some sternly enforced rules in this household. One was the entire abstaining from animal food. Animal life was sacred on the Farm, — even the black snakes, the dangerous copperheads, and the destructive nighthawks and opossums, were spared. The loss of many sheep and hogs induced this merciful farmer at last to have his stock branded; but farming was less profitable than pleasant, and the actor had to leave his

plough, like Cincinnatus, and go forth at the call of duty. Very necessary, though, were the calm and rest and congenial labor on that secluded farm after the strain on brain and nerves and the long wearisome travelling of those days.

In the year 1822 Mr. Booth welcomed his father to his country home. Richard Booth from his early manhood had regarded America as the desideratum of all men, and he wished to pass the remainder of his life in the United States. He was energetic in managing the Farm in his son's frequent and prolonged absence, and he employed his leisure in copying memoirs of eminent men. At the close of his life he was occupied upon a translation of the "Æneid," with a view of adapting it to the stage.

The play-bill announcing the first appearance of Mr. Booth in Philadelphia, at the house now known as the Chestnut Street Theatre, will be found in full on the following page. Three years previously Edmund Kean made his début before a Philadelphia audience under the same management.

Mr. Booth usually travelled from Harford County to Baltimore and to Richmond in his carryall with two horses, — "Captain," a very large animal, and the favorite but diminutive "Peacock." He frequently encountered Mr. Cooper, the tragedian, who also travelled by his own conveyance. In the year 1825 Mr. Booth sailed for Europe, accompanied by his family, and an extract from one of his letters to his father, quoted here, refers to an accidental meeting with Edmund Kean.

NEW THEATRE.

The managers respectfully inform the public that

MR. BOOTH,

Of the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, and Covent Garden, is engaged for a few nights, and will make his first appearance in this city on

Monday Evening, February 17th, 1823,

In the Tragedy of

RICHARD THE THIRD.

Richard, Duke of Gloster	Mr. Booth.
King Henry the Sixth	Mr. Wm. Warren.
Prince of Wales	Mr. Hathwell.
Duke of York	Miss H. Hathwell.
Duke of Buckingham	Mr. W. B. Wood.
Henry, Earl of Richmond	Mr. H. Wallack.
Duke of Norfolk	Mr. Wheatly.
Tressel	Mr. T. Jefferson.
Catesby	Mr. Darley.
Ratcliff	Mr. Scrivener.
Earl of Oxford	Mr. J. Jefferson.
Lieutenant of Tower	Mr. Bignall.
Lord Stanley	Mr. Hathwell.
Lord Mayor	Mr. Burke.
Tyrrel	Mr. Murray.
Blount	Mr. Greene.
Queen Elizabeth	Mrs. Tatnall.
Duchess of York	Mrs. Jefferson.
Lady Anne	Mrs. Darley.

After which, a favorite Farce, called the

SPOILED CHILD.

On Wednesday, the "Iron Chest"; *Sir Edward Mortimer,* Mr. Booth.

On Friday, "A New Way to Pay Old Debts"; *Sir Giles Overreach,* Mr. Booth.

"LIVERPOOL, Sept. 20, 1825.

"DEAR FATHER, — At last we are arrived after a passage of twenty-nine days' duration, which is a long one from America at this season. To-day we go to London through Leicester. Kean sails the day after to-morrow, by the 'Silas Richards,' for New York. Strange that he should meet me here — he ready to embark, and to that very country I have just left! He has been quite ill, and looks wretchedly. I passed an hour with him last night at his quarters, and reconciled our ancient misunderstanding. The vessel he goes in to New York will most probably be the conveyance for this letter. I really wish he may meet with success. He has been all along a victim to sharpers and flatterers, who buoyed him up with the notion of omnipotence, which now he awakes from, and perceives the hollowness of those on whom he mostly relied. Macready is sick, Young is gone to Italy for his health, and Elliston is reported to be dying."

Mr. Booth appeared in London at Drury Lane Theatre, opening in "Brutus." Being loudly called for at the fall of the curtain, he persistently refused to go forward, urging as his reason that the custom should be abolished. After this engagement he played at the Royalty Theatre, and on his opening night after the performance of "Richard" the entire building was burned to the ground. It was the result of an accident by which the management lost eighteen thousand pounds, while all that remained of Mr. Booth's entire wardrobe were three charred links of his coronation collar, which he afterward found amid the ruins.

From one of his letters dated February, 1826, the following extract is taken: —

"The distress is so excessive, in consequence of the number of banks failing and the full weekly list of bankrupts, that men look upon each other doubtful if they shall defend their own, or steal their neighbor's property. Famine stares all England in the face. As for theatricals, they are not thought of, much less patronized. The emigration to America will be very numerous, as it is hardly possible for the middling classes to keep body and soul together."

Mr. Booth received an offer to perform in rivalry with W. C. Macready in Dublin, but not considering the pecuniary inducement sufficient, he declined; and after fulfilling an engagement at Bristol, under the management of the elder Macready, he visited Holland. At Amsterdam he played *Macbeth* several times by special request of the Prince of Orange, who was present at each repetition of that character, and witnessed also his performance of *Iago*, on which occasion Mr. S. Chapman enacted *Othello*.

After performing in Rotterdam, Brussels, etc., Booth sailed from the former place for America, in the ship "Draper," Captain Hilliert. Possessing a facility of acquiring languages, he had made himself master of many tongues. Greek, Latin, and French were the acquisition of his college days, German and Spanish he studied in maturer years, and Arabic he endeavored to acquire in age. On this homeward voyage in 1827 he was occupied in the study of Italian. It was his habit to set himself a task consisting of a certain number of

words which he had previously written on slips of paper, and, as he walked the deck of the vessel, to commit them to memory.

An unfortunate passenger who was allowed free access to all parts of the vessel, and who, although insane, was not considered dangerous, conceived the idea that Mr. Booth was a conjurer, and practising the black art upon him. One day, while the unconscious student was in his cabin, his black girl rushed in, exclaiming, —

"The crazy man is coming with an axe!"

He turned toward the door just in time to catch the glance of the intruder. With the unflinching gaze of self-possession, he fixed the eye of the maniac, who gradually lowered the weapon, and, letting it fall behind him, walked slowly away.

Mr. Booth, on his return to America, made his first appearance, on the 24th of March, 1827, at the Park Theatre, New York, and played successively *Richard*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Posthumus*, *Reuben Glenroy*, and, for his benefit, *Selim*, in the "Bride of Abydos," and *Jerry Sneak*. In the month of June he again performed at the Park, appearing for his benefit as *Pescara*, in the "Apostate," — a character written expressly for him by Sheil, and which he had at first declined. The elder Conway represented *Hemeya* on this occasion.

Mr. Gould, in "The Tragedian," says of the performance: "Certainly in the personation of *Pescara* Booth drew off some of that spirit which filled his *Iago*, adulterated it with Shiel, and offered it with great acceptance to the rank palate of a popular audience, —

'Darkening his power to lend base subjects light.'

Yet the flashing and magnetic eye; the crisp, resonant, and changeful tones; the natural attitudes of easy power; the lithe strength in action, always characteristic of Booth, — lent their wonted charm to this performance also, and made *Pescara* yield a transitory delight."

In 1828 he consented to undertake the stage management of the Camp Street Theatre, New Orleans, under the lesseeship of his friend, Mr. Caldwell. He played *Richard III.* for sixteen nights to densely crowded houses. During his leisure hours he had perfected himself in several French dramas, playing, among other parts, *Faïel* in "Gabrielle De Vergy," *Tancred*, *Shakspere* in "Shakspere Amoureux"; and being a proficient in the French language, he was solicited by Mr. Davis, of the Théatre d'Orléans, to play *Orestes*, in Racine's tragedy of "Andromaque." His accentuation was so perfect, and every peculiarity of French acting was so minutely observed by him, that the astonishment and delight were universal. At the close of the performance he was loudly called for, and cries of "Talma! Talma!" saluted him, amid every sound of applause and approbation.

His copy of the play of "Andromaque" is profusely marked with stage directions, and is accentuated in his own handwriting. A note of reference is made to the fact that "the rôle of *Oreste* cost the life of the celebrated actor Montfleuri, who enacted it with such force that he exhausted his powers."

The following is a copy of the bill of Mr. Booth's performance: —

THÉÂTRE D'ORLÉANS.

MR. BOOTH!

Aujourd'hui Mardi, 19 Février, 1828.

Une représentation

D'ANDROMAQUE,

Tragédie en 5 actes et en vers de Racine, dans laquelle M. Booth jouera le rôle d'Oreste.

DISTRIBUTION:

Oreste, fils d'Agamemnon	M. Booth.
Pyrrhus, fils d'Achille, roi d'Epire	M. Leblanc.
Pylade, ami d'Oreste	Tabary.
Phœnix, gouverneur de Pyrrhus	Rochefort.
Andromaque, V've d'Hector	Mme. Cholet.
Hermione	" Clozel.
Cléone, confidente d'Andromaque.	" Placide.
Cephise, confidente d'Hermione	" Bolzé.

"L'administration ayant pensé que les talens de M. Booth, célèbre tragédien Anglais, seraient agréables au public, dont elle s'empressera toujours de prévenir les desirs, a engagé cet artiste à jouer, avant son départ de cette ville, le rôle d'Oreste dans la belle tragédie d'Andromaque de Racine. Mme. Cholet a bien voulu se charger du rôle difficile d'Andromaque pour ne pas faire manquer cette représentation."

A New Orleans paper said: "A spectacle of deep interest — one as novel as it was pleasing — was offered last Tuesday night in the Orleans Theatre, to the lovers of dramatic talents. Yielding to the solicitations of several gentlemen of this city, Mr. Booth consented to present himself before a French audience in the part of *Orestes*. This effort, perilous in the extreme, and which nothing but a wish to give to Frenchmen an op-

portunity of judging fairly of what is termed the *English style of tragic acting* could have urged Mr. Booth to risk, has been crowned with the most flattering success. The ever-increasing interest excited by the warmth of his feelings, the earnestness of his manner, and the impetuous ardor of his delivery, and, above all, whenever passion rose high, when the furies goaded *Orestes* to crimes, criticism was merged in admiration, and with one voice all wondered that a stranger should thus feel and express all the beauties of Racine."

Mr. Davis offered him three hundred dollars per night for a period of twelve nights, but prior engagements would not allow him to remain for so long a term. An arrangement was however effected for a repetition of "Andromaque" on Thursday, 21st. The announcement is taken from the *New Orleans Courier* of that date: —

"Mr. Booth, highly gratified for the manner in which he was received by the audience of the Orleans Theatre, has yielded to the request of the administration, that he would again play the part of *Orestes* before his departure, in order to afford those who could not procure boxes for the first representation an opportunity of witnessing his performance.

Mr. Booth's Second Appearance.

ANDROMAQUE;

To be followed by

THE WATER PORTER'S FAMILY,

by Scribe."

He then proceeded to Natchez and Nashville, and afterward passed a week with General Jackson at the Hermitage, where the time was pleasantly spent in congenial society, varied with readings from Shakspere and the poets. He next went to Cincinnati, where he played a very lucrative engagement.

In 1831 he engaged to perform at the Tremont Theatre, Boston, under the management of Mr. Dana, who was evidently unaccustomed to theatrical business, as the careless arrangement of his affairs indicated. He frequently engaged stars to perform a similar character on the same evening, and in this manner Mr. Booth and Mr. Hamblin both arrived according to their separate agreements, each claiming the house. The former, being the more attractive, was selected, and Mr. Hamblin received a hundred dollars per night, remaining in town the specified period of his engagement.

In speaking of the beautiful reading of Mr. Booth, the author of "The Actor" makes the following comment: —

"We will here record an incident related to the writer by the late Mr. Simmons, whose lectures on elocution and dramatic poetry are well remembered by the public. After witnessing one of Mr. Booth's splendid efforts in Boston, he introduced himself to Mr. Booth, and acknowledged the pleasure he had derived from listening to his beautiful readings, and requested that they might read together.

"Accordingly a chapter was selected from the Bible, 'and *never*,' said the gifted lecturer, '*was I before so struck with the eloquence, beauty, and power of the pas-*

sages read by the great actor. His fine features glowed with the fire of genius as he poured out his rich, melodious tones, apparently completely absorbed by the subject. Late as it was, I could have sat the night through listening to eloquence till then unheard, and of which before I had no conception.' "

Returning to Baltimore, Mr. Booth met his old friend, Thomas Flynn, who had recently arrived from England. Mr. Flynn had arranged to open the Annapolis Theatre, then in course of erection, and proposed to him to play an engagement there, offering a clear third of each night's receipts. In due time Mr. Booth proceeded to Annapolis; but instead of taking the usual mode of conveyance, he went in a wood-sloop, and did not arrive until a week after the time announced. The engagement proved a profitable one, and the theatre was nightly filled by the most fashionable people.

In the month of September, 1831, he accepted an offer from Mr. Simpson to act two nights with Mr. Forrest at the Park Theatre, New York. On the first occasion Booth performed *Pierre*, in "Venice Preserved," and Forrest *Jaffier;* the second night Booth acted *Othello*, and Forrest *Iago*, — the theatre being completely crowded to witness the great favorites in the two productions. Mr. Booth frequently expressed his admiration of Mr. Forrest's rendition of both *Othello* and *Iago*.

About this time Mr. Booth had obtained the lease of the Adelphi Theatre, Baltimore, and had engaged Mr. Flynn as his acting manager. He had designed opening it early in September, 1831; but as the building had

been undergoing extensive repairs, and was still in an unfinished state, Mr. Booth rented the Holliday Street Theatre until his own was completed. The principal members of his company were Messrs. Flynn, Cooper, Duff, Warren, Roberts, Finn, Mrs. Duff, and Mrs. Flynn.

During the season Charles Kean made his début before a Baltimore audience as *Richard III.* "Hamlet" was produced with the following powerful cast, Mr. Booth accepting the part of *Second Actor:* —

Hamlet	Mr. C. Kean.
Ghost	Mr. Duff.
Polonius	Mr. Warren.
Laertes	Mr. Archer.
King	Mr. Isherwood.
Horatio	Mr. Hazard.
Osric	Mr. J. Sefton.
First Grave-Digger	Mr. Flynn.
Second Grave-Digger	Mr. Mercer.
First Actor	Mr. McKinney.
Second Actor	Mr. Booth.
Ophelia	Mrs. Flynn.
Queen	Mrs. Duff.

"Booth gave the actor's speech with great effect. The audience rose *en masse*, and cheered him to the echo, as much for the beauty of its delivery as the modesty which induced him to select a subordinate character, thus bringing into effect the entire strength of his company, and extending every advantage to the distinguished stranger."

During the season, which was a very prosperous one, he played several new characters, among which

were *Roderick Dhu*, *Selim*, *Richard II.*, *Penruddock*, *Falkland*, in the "Rivals," *Hotspur*, and *Luke*, in "Riches." His *Luke* and other characters are thus criticised: —

"His representation of *Luke* is original and beautiful. The assumption of the lowly penitent after a course of extravagance and folly is among the most lifelike scenes ever portrayed by this master of the passions. Who that has witnessed his representation can ever forget his hypocritical plea for mercy when discovered in his treachery, and his sudden, tiger-like spring after finding it disregarded, and the bold transition from the fawning suppliant to the daring ruffian, defying, even in defeat, his injured brother? His representation of this character alone would stamp him superior to any actor on the stage. His *Reuben Glenroy* is also much admired for its chaste and beautiful performance. In tender passages, the mournful and touching cadences of his voice appeal directly to the heart; and in the representation of sterner passages, his acting approximates to the sublime.

"As *Richard the Third*, *Pescara*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Shylock*, and *Iago*, he is without an equal.

"His fifth act of *Iago* was a most exquisite portrayal of character; although *Othello* in this scene usually engrosses the attention of the audience, and *Iago* has but few lines to utter, yet with Junius Brutus Booth as the crafty villain, cowed, entrapped, with all his evil passions glowering in his face, we have seen his auditors fascinated as it were with horror, oblivious of all other

characters on the stage, and seizing the first pause in the action of the scene to vent their feelings in rapturous applause. The secret workings of *Iago's* mind flashed in those powerful eyes; the face reddened with suppressed rage, then turned livid with hate; and the bitter intensity with which he expressed the lines, —

> 'Demand me nothing; what you know, you know:
> From this time forth I never will speak word,'

was marvellous.

"During the remainder of the scene his countenance revealed what the tongue disdained to speak, and retained its magnetic influence upon the beholders until his final exit."

John Howard Payne thus criticises his performance of *Sir Edward Mortimer*, in the play of the "Iron Chest": —

"We must own we have never seen either that character, or Booth in his palmiest days, with more unmixed delight. The perturbations of a spirit generous and grand by nature, and idolizing popularity, but racked with a heavy and agonizing and damning secret, and jealously and unslumberingly on the alert for symptoms of its being suspected, were pictured with the genius and the power of a master. So was the whirlwind of despair at the withering secret's final detection. There was variety and truth in the artist's enunciation and attitudes and countenance, and these qualities were carried even to the expression of the hands, which, could they have been disjoined from that of the rest of his person, at any one point of the passion, would at a

glance have disclosed to an instructed eye the Hercules in his art. This manual eloquence (if we may venture such a phrase) escapes imitation, even in painting and sculpture, by mediocrity, but, if ever studied, as equally precious and difficult by those who know how to excel. Last evening Mr. Booth displayed it with surpassing skill."

Mr. James E. Murdock, in his very entertaining book, "The Stage," recently published, gives a graphic account of his first appearance with Mr. Booth. He says: —

"Of all the men with whom my professional duties made me acquainted, no one, perhaps, impressed me so strongly as the elder Booth. There was something peculiar about him that acted like a charm, and commanded the respect and won the esteem of all whose advances he encouraged; but he was, nevertheless, generally undemonstrative and shy. A morbid tendency of feeling, which gave rise to wild and defiant moods, led him at times to things at variance with the conventionalities of society, and entirely opposed to his well-known gentlemanly character; and these eccentricities caused coldness and reserve both with himself and his friends. But when the 'cloud' passed, and his true nature asserted itself, Booth was capable of winning the love of many and the esteem of all. His literary tastes and abilities were of a high order, while his mental qualities were remarkable for clearness and range. I remember the first time I was brought into direct contact with the magnetic influence by which he ruled the dramatic scene and swayed his audience. I was quite

a lad, and had not been on the stage more than a year or two when I was selected to play *Wilford* to his *Sir Edward Mortimer* for the first time. Booth's face, before he met with the accident which disfigured his nose, was of surpassing beauty, and, speaking in the spirit of enthusiasm, to my mind's eye it always realized the ideal grandeur represented in *Hamlet's* lines: —

> 'See what a grace was seated on this brow:
> Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
> An eye like Mars, to threaten and command.'

Such was the impression made on my youthful mind in gazing for the first time on Booth's features when dressed for *Sir Edward Mortimer*. The sweetness of a settled melancholy was in his face, while his large, lustrous eye was full of gentle tenderness. But I was destined to see that face and eye in a different light, and to realize a very different feeling from that of quiet admiration.

"On the morning of the rehearsal I found the great tragedian pleasant and communicative, and as I was anxious to learn the business of the scene and to execute it to the satisfaction of my superior, I was attentive and deeply interested. My readers will call to mind the relations of *Sir Edward Mortimer* and his young secretary. The latter was taken from an inferior position in life and elevated to the confidence and friendship of his patron, over whom hung — that fascination to the young — a profound mystery. With that mystery was connected an iron chest which *Sir Edward* was known to visit often, and always alone, returning from

such visits with evident marks of the deepest agitation.

"One day *Wilford*, being engaged in the secluded apartment where the chest was kept, with surprise observed that the key was in the lock. After overcoming honest scruples in a long struggle with fatal curiosity, he knelt before the mysterious chest and turned the key; then hesitating for a moment he searched the apartment in order to be satisfied that he was secure from observation. Now the stage business Mr. Booth was so particular in teaching me was this: I was enjoined to take time, and after a careful survey of the premises to kneel on one knee, place my left hand on the lid of the chest, then, gently raising it, to hold it back, and, looking closely in, to place my right hand on the papers which it contained, turning them over as if seeking for something hidden beneath. The strictest injunction was given to pay no attention to what was to follow on the part of *Sir Edward*, no matter how long the suspense might last, but when I felt his hand upon my shoulder to turn abruptly, letting the lid of the chest fall with a slam, and, still on my knee, hold a firm attitude till I was warned, by a sudden pressure of Mr. Booth's hand, to rise to my feet and stand before him.

"On the night of the performance I was nervous and ill at ease from the want of a firm and assured hold upon the words of my part, which I had mastered at short notice and with more attention to the sense than to special expression. However I contrived to keep up with the action of the play. At length I found myself in the presence of the mysterious chest. I was

almost breathless with excitement and from anxiety consequent on my strong desire to execute Mr. Booth's orders to the very letter. I had proceeded so far as to open the chest, and stooping over the papers awaited trembling on my knee the appointed signal for action. The time seemed an eternity, but it came at last. The heavy hand fell on my shoulder. I turned, and there, with the pistol held to my head, stood Booth glaring like an infuriated demon. Then for the first time I comprehended the reality of acting. The fury of that passion-flamed face and the magnetism of the rigid clutch upon my arm paralyzed my muscles, while the scintillating gleam of the terrible eyes, like the green and red flashes of an enraged serpent, fascinated and fixed me spell-bound to the spot. A sudden revulsion of feeling caused me to spring from my knees, but, bewildered with fright, and a choking sensation of undefined dread, I fell heavily to the stage, tripping Mr. Booth, who still clutched my shoulder. I brought him down with me, and for a moment we lay prostrate. But suddenly recovering himself he sprang to his feet, with almost superhuman strength dragging me up, as I clung to his arm in terror. Shaking himself free of my grasp, I sank down again, stunned and helpless. I was aroused to consciousness, however, by a voice calling me in suppressed accents to rise, and then became aware that Mr. Booth was kneeling at my side. He helped me to my feet, whispering in my ear a few encouraging words, and then dexterously managed in spite of the accident, and my total inability to speak, to continue the scene to its close.

"Thus was I, an unfortunate tyro, saved from disgrace by the coolness and kindness of one who had every reason to be moved by a very different state of mind; for it was evident that, but for the actor's readiness and skill in improvising the business of the stage, one of the most important and interesting scenes of the play would have proved a mortifying failure. The kindness of the act was its own reward, for my present recollection is that the audience never evinced the slightest indication of the presence of a disturbing element, but on the contrary gave evidence of their satisfaction by applause at the critical moment to which I have alluded. In more than one way Booth was a true poetic genius and dramatic artist. He always seemed to grasp the ideal beauty and intellectual power of the poet's thought, and worked out from the author's language the full force of the emotion or passion which was the root of its mental growth. Thus mastering the intent and purpose of the words, he invested their utterance with the graceful foliage or the more vigorous strength of branch and limb from the power of his varied and wonderful forms of expression. This he seemed to do apparently with so much real enjoyment of the poet's innermost feelings that the fervor of a gratified sense seized upon his hearers, and established a congenial and sympathetic communion with the enthusiasm of the actor."

In January, 1832, Mr. Booth opened at the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, in "Sertorius," a new play written by the eminent lawyer, David Paul Brown. This performance is spoken of as being exquisitely

beautiful, and the tragedy one of great interest and sublimity. At the termination of this engagement he visited professionally New Orleans, Mobile, Louisville, and Cincinnati. In 1833 the following letter was addressed to his father. His letters generally present a curious combination of theology, metaphysics, hygiene, and farming.

FRIDAY EVE.

DEAR FATHER, — The weather was so bad that the managers closed the house on Wednesday evening. I had to play on Thursday, in lieu of it, and again to-night. As Joe will want "Fanny" to finish the ploughing, I send her home. Let the gentleman who bears this have "Peacock" to ride back to Baltimore. Let Joe sow the timothy in the meadow. Tell Junius not to go opossum hunting, or setting rabbit-traps, but to let the poor devils live. Cruelty is the offspring of idleness of mind and beastly ignorance, and, in children, should be repressed and not encouraged, as is too often the case, by unthinking beings who surround them. A thief, who takes property from another, has it in his power, should he repent, to make a restoration; but the robber of life never can give back what he has wantonly and sacrilegiously taken from beings perhaps innocent, and equally capable of enjoying pleasure or suffering torture with himself. The ideas of Pythagoras I have adopted; and as respects our accountability to animals hereafter, nothing that man can preach can make me believe to the contrary. "Every death its own avenger breeds." Enough of this. I think there is some parsnip-seed hanging in a paper, by the look-

ing-glass, in the parlor. Let Joe sow some, on manure, in small trenches, in the garden, — say three or four rows.

Read the wondrous tale of "Alroy," by D'Israeli. He was, in the twelfth century, the Jewish Messiah, and, but for a woman, the daughter of a robber's daughter, would have given *us*, perhaps, another religion, as all were obliged, by the theocracy, who were his ministers and supporters, to embrace the Hebrew faith, or die. Junius is a good boy, and will make a scholar of no mean capacity. I hope you enjoy health, and take my theory founded on positive experience, as respects going to sleep. Rise early, walk, or use some exercise in the open air, and, when going to bed, drink a *warm* liquid, — either weak grog, gruel, or even water; drink nearly or quite a pint at one draught. Lie down directly, and in fifteen minutes you will sink into a comfortable lethargy. Coffee and tea, however, must be avoided, as they prevent sleep. A slice of bread-and-butter, and an onion or lettuce for supper, prior to this potation, is good, — much opium, and of a harmless quantity, being contained in the latter vegetable.

God bless you. I hope soon to see you again.

Your affectionate son,

J. B. BOOTH.

Mr. Booth entered into an engagement with Mr. Hamblin, to play three nights a week for the period of a year. The Richmond Theatre was taken for this purpose, and a part of the company proceeded in a

stage-coach to Baltimore. On the road to Belair the stage broke down, and the party, including Miss Vincent, Messrs. Hamblin, Flynn, Phillips, and others, were compelled to remain over night at the Farm. They walked a long distance to the cottage, and evidently disturbed the monotony of forest life, for the servants who had grown gray on the place were wont to tell of the merry players who, many years ago, made such an unceremonious visit. The stillness of the woods soon became oppressive to the jovial guests, while to the master of these solitudes the faintest sound of insect, breeze, or brook, was full of a joyous mystery, and he manifested surprise when asked by one of the party, "Booth, how can you exist in such a wilderness?"

On the following afternoon the company proceeded to Baltimore, and, arriving in Richmond, opened to a crowded house. Mr. Booth became the subject of a newspaper controversy, arising from his refusal to answer the call of the audience at the fall of the curtain. On the fourth night of his engagement he received intelligence of the dangerous illness of one of his children, and abruptly left the city without assigning the reason for his departure. The child lived only a short time after his arrival, and was buried in the little graveyard on the Farm. Mr. Booth then proceeded to Baltimore with the intention of completing his engagement in Richmond, but was there informed that the theatre was closed, and that Mr. Hamblin had gone to New York. Being detained in Baltimore for several days by the snow, a letter arrived from Belair requesting his

immediate return to the sick-bed of another of his children. He arrived only in time to witness her death. The loss of this child was the culmination of his sorrow, for his mind became entirely unsettled for a time and a painful illness followed.

While the bereaved mother braced every nerve to nurse her remaining children, and the father had quite succumbed to his affliction, Mr. Hamblin, unaware how grief had settled over the little farm, and unable by the heavy snow-storms to effect any communication with that retired place, had brought a lawsuit against Mr. Booth for breaking his engagement. His father, Richard Booth, determined at this crisis to stop proceedings by going at once to Philadelphia. Distressed and infirm as the old gentleman was, he set out upon the tedious journey with alacrity, not heeding the inclement weather. Old Joe accompanied him as protector and waiting-man; such confidence was placed in the integrity of this *slave for life* by his legal owner, that consent was readily given for him to accompany his master; the fact being well known to all parties that the slave could assert his freedom as soon as he touched the soil of Pennsylvania. With laudable pride the old man used to tell how he repaid his owner's confidence by returning home. He died in slavery, — a true-hearted, faithful, good old man, enjoying the respect of all who knew him; he never murmured at his own bondage, but with his small earnings he bought the freedom of his wife, so that of their numerous family only four of her children were born free, the others being slaves to his wife's master until the age of twenty-four.

The threatened lawsuit was amicably adjusted, when, on recovery from a severe illness, Mr. Booth consented to perform three nights a week during a period of three months, at the Bowery Theatre, New York. This theatre at that time was in its palmy days under Mr. Hamblin's management, and was conducted in a manner superior to the Park. Mr. Booth opened with "Richard III." to a house yielding thirteen hundred dollars. He engaged to play on the intervening nights at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, under the direction of Mr. Duffy, for the space of one month, Mr. Booth playing alternately in the two cities and travelling the intermediate distance by stage-coach. The last night of this engagement in Philadelphia he acted *Oroonoko*, and as he was hurrying through the performance he fancied some dissatisfaction was expressed by the audience. He arose, after *killing himself*, and walking to the footlights exclaimed, "I'll serve you as General Jackson did: I'll *veto* you." At this period the celebrated veto messages of General Jackson were creating great excitement in political circles.

Mr. Booth went from New York to New Orleans, thence to Mobile, and afterward through the Western cities. During this tour the calamity which seemed to increase in strength and frequency with maturer years, assumed many singular phases. In the records of his youth, when his profession held every incentive to ambition, energy, and indefatigable labor, — when his habits were most temperate and abstemious, — we occasionally find those slight aberrations of mind which

mark that exquisite turning-point between genius and madness. To those accustomed to the intense excitability of peculiar temperaments, who see how the brain of the actor is wrought upon by the assumption of harrowing, though fictitious scenes, and who feel how frequently the delineator of the passions thinks, dreams, exists in a sphere of ideality, it is neither strange nor difficult to comprehend how such minds are overthrown by the reaction, and oftentimes ruined utterly;

"Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh."

Thus from early youth his children learned from their mother, the devoted and unwearying nurse of him who endured these periodical tortures of mind, to regard these seasons of abstraction with sad and reverent forbearance.

Mr. Booth, at the conclusion of this tour, commenced an engagement in New York on the 29th of August, 1836, at the National Theatre, situated on the corner of Leonard and Church Streets, under the management of Mr. Flynn. The first night he performed *Shylock*, when the receipts were sixteen hundred dollars; and he played eight nights to houses almost equally crowded. The intellect and fashion of the city nightly filled the theatre. He visited Philadelphia and Baltimore, and in October sailed with his family for Europe.

He was engaged on arrival to play three nights at Drury Lane Theatre for twenty-five pounds a night, opening as *Richard*. He played *Iago* the second evening, and repeated *Richard* on the third. He after-

ward played a brief engagement at the Surrey Theatre, going thence to Sadlers Wells.

While performing in Birmingham he received news of the death of a favorite son, Henry Byron Booth, whom he had left with his family in London. The grave of this son is in the churchyard at Pentonville (near that of Grimaldi). On the stone erected by Mr. Booth are the beautiful lines taken from Southey's "Doctor," —

> "Oh, even in spite of death, yet still my choice,
> Oft with the inward, all-beholding eye,
> I think I see thee, and I hear thy voice."

The following letter refers to this bereavement: —

PENTONVILLE, Jan. 28, 1837.

DEAR FATHER, — We have at last cause, and severe it is, to regret coming to England. I have delayed writing till time had somewhat softened the horror of the event. Our dear little Henry is dead! He caught the small-pox, and it proved fatal; he has been buried about three weeks, in the Chapel ground, close by. Think what his loss has been to us, — so proud as I was of him above all others. The infernal disease has placed Hagar [a slave] in the hospital. Edwin and the baby* were inoculated and are getting well. I

* The "baby" alluded to in this letter was not named until she was nearly two years old, it being a matter of discussion whether to call her after the accomplished young Sydney Cowell (Mrs. Bateman), who was a great favorite with Mr. and Mrs. Booth, or Ayesha, in recollection of one of Mahomet's wives. Finally the decision was made by Mr. Booth writing to his wife, — "Call the little one *Asia* in remembrance of that

shall play a few nights more in London, and at Edinburgh before I return. Forrest won't play any more,—at least he says so now. Hamblin is here; so are Barrett of Boston, Ternan of Philadelphia, and Rice; the only one, it appears, who has really bettered his fortunes in London is *he*. *Jim Crow*, one would have thought, the Cockneys could not understand, but contrary to all calculation it is the mania amongst them.

Hoping you are in health, and may long continue so, is the prayer of

Your affectionate son,

J. B. Booth.

After this melancholy loss he started with his family for America on the ship "Ontario." On his arrival in New York, he acted at the Bowery Theatre on the night of the 4th of July, 1837, receiving two hundred dollars for the performance, which closed the season. In the fall of the year he fulfilled an engagement at the Olympic in New York, and on the third night he appeared as *Richard III.*, W. R. Blake enacting *Richmond*, Mrs. Blake *Queen Elizabeth*, and Master Louis Blake the *Duke of York*. The theatre was brilliantly illuminated in commemoration of the evacuation of New York by the British.

Mr. Booth was engaged to perform in New York at the Bowery on the 18th of February, 1838, but on arriving in the city was astonished to find the building in

country where God first walked with man, and *Frigga*, because she came to us on Friday, which day is consecrated to the Northern Venus."

ruins. A benefit was given at the Park for the aid of the sufferers by the conflagration, and he volunteered to act on the occasion. At the rise of the curtain he was missing, and Mr. Flynn finally discovered him at a fire in William Street, laboring at an engine, in the endeavor, as he said, "to save people's property from destruction."

He subsequently visited the South on a professional tour, accompanied by Mr. Thomas Flynn. They embarked in the steamer "Neptune." Mr. Booth was observed to be very melancholy on the voyage, and talked frequently of Conway, who, in a fit of depression, had committed suicide by jumping into the sea. When the vessel neared the place where the unfortunate actor had perished, he came hurriedly on deck, saying he had a message for Conway, and leaped into the ocean. A boat was immediately lowered, and with difficulty he was rescued from a watery grave. After he was safe in the boat, his first words, according to Mr. Flynn's report, were, "I say, Tom, look out: you 're a heavy man, — be steady; if the boat upsets we 'll all be drowned."

It was during this Charleston trip that his nose was broken, spoiling the beauty of his countenance, and giving to his harmonious voice a nasal tone.

Mr. Gould thus speaks of this occurrence: "The accident by which his nose was broken, spoiling forever his noble profile, threatened for a time the more serious disaster of a permanent injury to his voice. Immediately on recovery he began to play. To those who, during these first performances, recalled the per-

fect features and the resonant tones of former years, the sight and sound were indeed pitiful. The head tones were scarcely perceptible. But instead of humoring this vocal infirmity he spoke with all the old mastery of motive, and let the result take care of itself. By this persistent method, in less than two years after the accident his voice had completely recovered its original scope, variety, and power, as we can attest by close, solicitous, and comparative observation."

During the last ten years of his life the elder Booth passed a considerable portion of his time in the midst of his family, occasionally making professional tours with a careless disregard of fame, which may be accounted for by the depressing consciousness of the accident which had marred his face and voice. It was, however, a marked peculiarity of his entire career that he would consent to perform at any theatre regardless of its pretensions, and was equally unconcerned about the costliness or grandeur of his wardrobe, so long as it was correct in point of fashion and of date. He played annually in Boston and New Orleans, in which places he was an established favorite, and, having removed his residence to Baltimore, made periodical visits to the Farm during the oppressive heat of summer.

He indulged his philanthropic inclinations unrestrainedly, and the particulars of some charitable visit or donation would frequently be disclosed to the family by the grateful recipient.

The writer's earliest recollection of her father, when she was four years of age, is seeing him upon his knees before a rough sailor who had asked alms at the door.

The poor fellow had a bad wound on his leg which was suffering from neglect, and Mr. Booth brought him into the house, and washed and bandaged the injured limb with the tenderest care.

These little deeds of kindness were of almost daily occurrence. He thus sought to impress upon the minds of his children the lessons of humanity to man and beast more by his own acts than by precept. He delighted to seek out the destitute and unfortunate, and to aid them by his sympathy as well as by his bounty.

It was on one of these errands of mercy that the horse thief, Fontaine, alias Lovett, was pointed out to him. Lovett was then confined in the Louisville jail. It was remarked that he had no means of obtaining counsel, and Mr. Booth, although assured that his case was hopeless, sent him a lawyer and defrayed the expenses of his trial; for which kindness, when Lovett heard of it, he bequeathed him his skull, desiring "that it should be given after his execution to the actor Booth, with the request that he would use it on the stage in 'Hamlet,' and think, when he held it in his hands, of the gratitude his kindness had awakened."

The skull was accordingly sent to his residence while he was absent from the city, but Mrs. Booth, finding what a horrible thing had been left in her house, immediately returned it to the doctor to whom it had been intrusted for preparation and delivery. (In 1857 the doctor, who had retained the skull, sent it to Edwin Booth, who used it in the graveyard scene in "Hamlet" on several occasions, and afterward had it buried.)

In the year 1850 the elder Booth played several engagements at the National Theatre, Chatham Street, New York. At this time the Broadway Theatre, now demolished, was the only establishment on Broadway strictly devoted to the regular drama. A misunderstanding having occurred between Mr. Marshall, the lessee, and Mr. Booth, he was prevailed upon by Mr. Purdy, of the National, to accept an engagement with him. He was supported by John R. Scott, H. A. Perry, and a superior company. The house was nightly crowded with his admirers. Subsequently, he made his last appearance in New York at this theatre, on the 19th of September, 1851, playing *Shylock* and *Sir Edward Mortimer*.

In Washington, in 1850, Mr. Booth performed *Brutus*, and his son Edwin, *Titus*. The author, John Howard Payne, witnessed the performance. In Richmond, Va., shortly afterward the same play was repeated, father and son assuming the same characters. In the solemn interview between them, where the Roman Consul is condemning his son to an ignominious death, his countenance portrayed an agony of suffering, and tears streamed from his eyes as he took the head of his recreant boy to his bosom. The audience was breathless from intensity of feeling, when the silence was suddenly broken by an exclamation from a drunken man in the gallery. Mr. Booth, still absorbed in the part, raised his eyes and, gazing fixedly towards the gallery, said sternly, "Beware! I am the headsman, I am the executioner." The effect thus produced was shown in the continued silence of the audience, which greatly

added to the solemnity of the scene. This complete identification with the characters was one of the subtle charms of his acting; his clear and vigorous mind could imbue itself with the varied tints of another's personality, holding its own individuality in reserve, or as it were subservient. An eminent actor once remarked of Mr. Booth "that he was always within the picture;" and in the soul of the character, might well be added, — unlike Boileau's easily recognized writer, who, "inspired by self-love, forms all his heroes like himself."

In 1851 Mr. Booth performed a variety of characters at the old Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia. Mr. James E. Murdock appeared as *Falconbridge* to his *King John*, *Jaffier* to his *Pierre*, *Antony* to his *Cæsar*. Mr. Booth acted *Pescara*, and Miss Jean Davenport *Florinda*. "The Merchant of Venice" was then produced. Mr. Booth arrived at the theatre unusually early, and immediately prepared himself for the part. At the rising of the curtain *Shylock* was not to be found, although he had been previously observed by persons behind the scenes. Mr. Fredericks, the stage-manager, was in perplexity, and the actors generally were confused and anxious.

It was decided that the performance should commence and continue uninterruptedly to the time of *Shylock's* entrance (which does not occur until nearly the close of the first act), meanwhile every effort should be employed to discover the "Wandering Jew," and if he did not come in due time the stage-manager's favorite walking gentleman should address the audience and expose "Mr. Booth's unprincipled conduct."

The much dreaded time arrived, and *Shylock* had not appeared. Messengers had been despatched to various localities, and the theatre had undergone a thorough search. Mr. Fredericks was in a most unenviable state of excitement, and the apologist was ready with his speech, when at the exact point of time the door of a dark scene-closet was quietly opened from the interior, and *Shylock* mysteriously emerged therefrom, gently pushed Mr. Fredericks aside, and walked slowly and in deep reflection upon the stage.

The stage-manager, stricken with amazement, vanished into the green-room, where he related the astonishing behavior of Booth, vowing that "he was always an enigma, — that he never could understand him." As he had not recently appeared in the character of *Shylock*, he was consequently more than ordinarily nervous on this occasion, and had dressed early and retired to the most secluded spot he could find, in order to go over his part without interruption. He was quite innocent of having created any uneasiness or confusion, and consequently walked out of the darkness, completely engrossed in the part.

In the spring of 1852, Junius Booth, his son, who had been for several years a resident of California, came home on a visit to the family, and with the intention of taking his father back with him; as he had been earnestly solicited by the Californians to induce him to go to that country. They left New York in June, accompanied by Edwin Booth. In thirty-seven days they reached San Francisco, having lost eight days by detention in Panama.

Mr. Booth opened at the Jenny Lind Theatre, and attracted crowded audiences for two weeks, when the engagement was imperatively terminated, the site of the theatre having been previously purchased for the erection of a City Hall. He then went up the river to fulfil an engagement at Sacramento, where the patronage of the public was comparatively small, and his reception, though cordial, was not so rapturous and enthusiastic as that which greeted him in San Francisco. In September he again performed in San Francisco, and attracted overflowing houses at the Adelphi Theatre. In these California engagements Edwin Booth acted in nearly all of his father's pieces, appearing as *Richmond*, *Laertes*, *Hemeya*, and *Jaffier*.

Mr. Booth suddenly resolved to return to the "States," and insisted on his son remaining to pursue the profession he had chosen. Of late years he had frequently expressed his intention of retiring from active life, and as a sad intimation that the idea had weight with him, he gave his *Richard's* diadem — an ornament that had been for years a treasure of considerable care — to his eldest son, saying that he should not need it. This resignation of the crown was painfully remembered in connection with that final event so soon to distress them, yet he parted from his sons in excellent health and spirits, looking hopefully forward to reaching home. He had engaged his passage on the "Brother Jonathan," and on the morning of starting, while anxiously superintending the transportation of his baggage to the boat, he was somewhat annoyed at the dilatory manner of a rough, surly sailor who was executing the work,

and kindly urged the man to show more alacrity; but, observing that he obstinately moved slower, and was disposed to be insolent, he inquired sharply, "What are you employed for? who are you?"

The seaman with a vicious look gruffly replied, "I am a *thief*."

Mr. Booth, with a quick intuition of character, immediately exclaimed, "Give me your hand, comrade; I am a pirate!"

The man looked abashed, yet, evidently recognizing the spirit of kindliness which prompted such a response, extended his hand in silence.

On his arrival in New Orleans in November, feeling well and vigorous, he accepted an engagement at the St. Charles Theatre. He performed six nights, and was greeted with thronged and enthusiastic audiences, but could not be prevailed upon to extend his engagement, as he was desirous of reaching home. His last appearance was as *Sir Edward Mortimer* in the "Iron Chest" and as *John Lump*.

Being greatly exhausted after the performance, it is supposed that he contracted a cold, which rapidly grew worse. He took passage for Cincinnati on the "J. S. Chenoweth," and becoming in a few days very feverish, he drank freely of the Mississippi water, which greatly increased his disorder. There was no physician on board, and he would not trouble the captain to procure one, but with all that patient endurance which had ever characterized him, bore his sufferings unmurmuringly and alone. He kept his stateroom almost entirely, to avoid remark, and by this means incurred still greater

THE LAST PLAY-BILL.

ST. CHARLES THEATRE.

BENEFIT OF

MR. BOOTH,

And positively last night of his engagement.

Friday Evening, Nov. 19th, 1852.

MR. BOOTH IN PLAY AND FARCE.

THE IRON CHEST.

Sir Edward Mortimer	Mr. Booth.
Wilford	Mr. Nagle.
Fitzharding	Mr. Kemble.
Adam Winterton	Mr. Mark Smith.
Sampson Rawbold	Mr. De Bar.
Orson	Mr. Lewellen.
Rawbold	Mr. Potter.
Servant	Mr. Melville.
Gregory	Mr. Jones.
Peter	Mr. Howard.
Helen	Mrs. Stone.
Blanch	Mrs. Estelle Potter.
Barbara	Mrs. Howard.

To conclude with the Musical Farce of the

REVIEW;

Or, The Wag of Windsor.

John Lump	Mr. Booth.

neglect. His disease turned to consumption of the bowels, of which he died on Tuesday, 30th of November, 1852, at 2 P. M. The steward of the vessel reported his last words to have been, in a scarcely audible voice, "Pray! pray! pray!" On reaching Cincinnati the Masonic fraternity had the body embalmed in a metallic coffin and deposited in the Baptist vault. Mrs. Booth was telegraphed for, and arrived in Cincinnati expecting to find her husband very ill, — the second despatch, announcing his decease, not reaching Baltimore until her departure from that city. She returned home as soon as possible, bringing the body with her for interment.

For three days the house in which his remains lay was thronged with people of every class. The walls of the parlors were draped with white, pictures and mirrors were covered, and all the ornaments were removed, excepting a marble figure of Shakspere, which was placed near the coffin, and seemed to gaze down upon the form beneath. The face under the glass plate was very calm and beautiful, and the brown hair more thickly strewn with white than when his family had seen it last; the gray eyes were partly visible between the half-shut lids, and the lips, retaining their lifelike color, were smilingly closed. Such a placidity and repose pervaded the whole countenance that it was felt how easy the transition must have been from suffering life to this calm sleep. How often had his children found him at rest with this same look upon his face, and had stepped softly not to disturb him! Now its perfect naturalness occasioned doubt in many minds,

and physicians were sent for to satisfy his family whether this was really death or a trance. Hope was futile and vain; but while it animated the hearts that suffered, it had become as powerful as life.

The family and attendants proceeded to the cemetery, followed by a long procession on foot, composed of members of the theatrical profession, private citizens, and a large concourse of colored people, many of whom, as well as those connected with the theatres, wore crape on the left arm for thirty days. Mrs. Booth had requested that no music should be played as the funeral moved through the streets, or at the grave, and with respectful observance of her wish Volandt's full band removed to a distant part of the cemetery. As the procession toiled slowly up the hill and entered the grounds, the faint throbs of the Dead March broke mournfully upon the ear; the coffin was placed on a bier, and set down at the gates of the mausoleum. The music died away in echoes, and the minister, with his long black robes fluttering in the wind, began the solemn service, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Hundreds of men stood bareheaded in the bleak evening air; the ground was thickly crusted with snow, which now began fluttering down again, and the sun threw its last gleams over all as it was slowly sinking behind the hills.

In the spring, when the snow had entirely gone, the grave was dug, and the coffin, taken from the mausoleum, was buried. It was subsequently removed to a larger lot in Greenmount Cemetery, Baltimore.

On Edwin Booth's return from California he erected

a monument over his father's grave. The sculpture was executed in Boston, and completed in the spring of 1858, and the monument was placed over the tomb on the 1st of May, his father's birthday. To this plot have been removed the remains of Richard Booth, father of Junius Brutus Booth, who died in 1840 aged seventy-six, and the bodies of five children.

The following letter to Mrs. Booth was written by the manager of the New Orleans Theatre: —

NEW ORLEANS, Dec. 6, 1852.

MRS. J. B. BOOTH.

DEAR MADAM, — It was with deep regret and sorrow that we read here a telegraphic paragraph, on the morning of the 2d inst., announcing the decease of your late worthy husband. It was the more startling because the least expected. During his engagement with us in the St. Charles Theatre it was generally remarked how well he looked and how well he performed. For myself, who remember him since his first week's performance in the United States, and have been well acquainted with his professional career, I was agreeably astonished at the vigor evinced by him during the six nights he performed with us, and the conclusion of his engagement seemed a cause of regret to the public generally. As a matter of information to you, I would state that we paid him ten hundred and eighty-four dollars for his engagement of the six nights. He spoke of having been robbed on his route through Mexico, but I do not recollect of what amount. Trusting, madam, that you will find consolation in the reflection that the dispensations of Providence are always for wise and merciful

purposes, and wishing you health and the enjoyments of life for many years, I am

Your obedient serv't and well-wisher,

N. M. LUDLOW.

Booth's genius was held in high estimation by many of our countrymen. A New York journal said: —

"The late Rufus Choate was an enthusiastic lover of Shakspere's works, and familiar with every line of them. Of all the players, he liked Junius Brutus Booth the best. In remarkable power of intense mental action and concentrated feeling, the eminent actor and the incomparable lawyer resembled each other. Booth was the only player that realized his ideal of a great tragedian; and when he heard of his decease, he exclaimed sorrowfully, '*There are no more actors.*'"

The following extracts are taken from an analytical sketch published in New York: —

"Booth was possessed of great kindness of heart, and was one of the most humane, unselfish, and generous men that ever lived. He cared little for money, only as a means to gratify his humane and kindly impulses; and as for fame, perhaps so much was never carried by any man with such careless ease and real indifference. His faults are of a kind incident to such a nature. His humanity was illustrated more by example than by precept. His loving-kindness was not confined by any means to his fellow-creatures, but went out towards the whole animal creation, and in a manner so strange and eccentric at times that it was not unfrequently regarded as the evidence of insanity. A very amiable insanity

it must be admitted, and a very natural outgrowth of a disposition we can but wish was more common in a cruel and selfish world.

. . . . . .

"We have been told that once, when living on his farm in Harford County, he sent for all his neighbors and friends, far and near, to come to his place and attend a funeral. When they arrived they found, to their great disgust, that it was the carcass of a favorite horse that he wished to have buried with all due solemnity. The crowd retired, some in disgust, others laughing at the strange performance. His family, however, understood the meaning of the thing. A physician was sent for, and the 'chief mourner' passed through a long and unusually serious attack of disease. One night when he was to act he did not appear, nor could he be found at his lodgings. He did not come home that night. Next morning he was found in the woods, several miles from the city, wandering in the snow. He was taken care of. His derangement proved to be temporary, and his reason returned in a few days.

"We have the best authority for believing that this tendency in Booth to disappoint audiences before whom he was to appear, and for which he was so much censured (most people being inclined to attribute it to habits of dissipation), arose far more frequently from causes over which he had no control. When at home he would sometimes disappear in a very strange and unaccountable manner, remaining away for hours at a time, and return silent, thoughtful, and completely abstracted, either unable or not inclined to give any

account of himself. His family were not disposed to question him closely at such times, but were fully convinced that these strange freaks were not in the remotest degree connected with inebriety. Anything occurring suddenly, which was calculated to rouse strongly his sympathies, would cause him to forget entirely his engagements; and many times large audiences, impatiently waiting his appearance on the stage, were doomed to disappointment, and left muttering their imprecations, while he himself was quite unconscious of any impropriety till reminded of his neglect.

"We cannot close this very imperfect analysis of the moral and intellectual character of one in whom the elements were so strangely mixed as to lead the world to doubt whether they were of good or evil, without a glance at his religious convictions.

"These, as was to have been expected, partook largely of his native mental and moral characteristics. They were broad, liberal, comprehensive, and founded upon love. With him, indeed, love was the fulfilment of the law, and without it all loudly proclaimed professions were but 'sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.'

"He was emphatically a devout man. His last words uttered in the ear of the steward of the steamboat, his sole attendant in his dying hour, were 'Pray! pray! pray!' and thus passed from earth this troubled, but loving, sincere, and humane spirit.

"If to possess the most lively humanity, and a child-like, confiding faith in everything that is good, noble,

and pure, in whatever shape it presents itself, is acceptable on high; if to cherish for all animate nature the most tender love, is to fulfil the law and cause much to be forgiven; if he who considereth the poor is blessed, then may we not hope that this man, after his weary toil in the journey of life, bearing his heavy burden of disease, at last found rest in the kingdom of that God he tried to worship 'in spirit and in truth,' and that Redeemer in whose footsteps he, at least, strove to walk according to the light that was in him, and the power that was given him."

So ceased to beat on earth that gentle and unselfish heart. Whatever errors had controlled his judgment, or obscured that penetrative sense which renders men so worldly wise, it was honorable to him that through all the changes of a varied life he retained an almost child-like faith in the honesty of human nature. Too credulous, perhaps, of the universality of this quality, he was easily swayed by that unquestioning philanthropy which formed the basis of his character.

In disposition he was mild and unobtrusive, yet his kindness was qualified with undeviating firmness. His idea of *home* was a sacred circle wherein few were admitted save the immediate family. In the youth of his children everything connected with his profession was carefully avoided, as if he feared, by intercourse or allusion, to throw that glamour over its reality which might delude the senses and engender romantic desires for excitement.

For his two younger sons he had a workshop erected in the garden, and stored with lumber and the necessary

tools; thus blending pleasure with instruction, he strove to excite in their minds a love of mechanical pursuits, quoting "*Laborare est orare.*" Before leaving for California, he placed them under the careful guardianship of excellent teachers.

Prior to any anticipation of this voyage, he was erecting a handsome cottage on the Farm, where he purposed to pass the summer months of every year. The building was designed in the Elizabethan style, arranged to suit his own peculiar fancy. The site selected is near the old cabin which had then for many years been occupied by the servants.

Occasionally his children were permitted to visit the theatre, but were never allowed a free indulgence of promiscuous plays. On one occasion he took every member of the family to witness Mr. Macready's "Werner." The writer can remember only a sombre man with peculiar brows and guttural voice, dragging through what seemed to her a very dismal tragedy; but Mr. Booth pronounced it "a most exquisite performance."

He was always a deep student, and would set himself tasks, committing them to memory like a schoolboy. Late in life he acquired the part of *Penrudduck*, and performed it perfectly; but, failing to retain it for a future rendition, he acknowledged, almost sadly, that "time was gaining on him."

A striking peculiarity in his character was the contrast between his assumption of democracy by which he sought the level of the humblest, and encouraged even the low and vile to approach him as friends, and

that innate dignity which would exalt him as a peer above the herd, and check all attempt at undue familiarity. There was an awe about him that neither his deep learning, age, nor position elicited, but which the natural demeanor of the man inspired.

One of the most beautiful qualities of his nature was *humility*, — that lowliness of soul which emanates from a disregard of self, and, while elevating its possessor, causes him to appreciate in others all that is truly great and good, unaffected by the meaner passions. Perhaps it was the daily exercise of this self-abnegation that rendered him so childlike yet so noble in the eyes of all who loved him, while, in the pursuance of his profession, it left him free from the petty malice and jealousies of an actor's life, and enabled him justly to award praise to the meritorious, and discern true worth in any garb.

All forms of religion and all temples of devotion were sacred to him, and he never failed to bare his head reverently when passing a church. He worshipped at many shrines; he admired the Koran, and in his copy of that volume many beautiful passages are underscored. Days sacred to color, ore, and metals were religiously observed by him. In the synagogues he was known as a Jew, because he conversed with rabbis and learned doctors, and joined their worship in the Hebraic tongue. He read the Talmud, also, and strictly adhered to many of its laws.

Several fathers of the Roman Catholic Church recount pleasant hours spent with him in theological discourse, and aver that he was of their religion because of his

knowledge of the mysteries of their faith. Of the numerous houses of worship to which he went, the one he most loved to frequent was a floating church, or "Sailor's Bethel." The congregation was of the humblest kind, and the ministry not at all edifying. The writer remembers kneeling through a lengthy impromptu prayer, which contained no spirit of piety to her childish ears; but looking around wearily at her father, she beheld his face so earnestly inspired with devotion, that she felt rebuked, and it became pleasant to attend to that which was so devoid of interest before.

His reverence for religion was universal and deep-rooted. It was daily shown in acts of philanthropy and humane deeds, which were, however, too often misdirected. He was not a sectarian, but made many creeds his study; and although the dogmas of the Church might have yielded him a more enduring peace, yet the tenderness of his heart, from which emanated his loving-kindness and great charity, afforded strength to his declining years.

"Why then doth flesh, a bubble-glass of breath,
Hunt after honor and advancement vain,
And rear a trophy for devouring death,
With so great labor and long-lasting pain,
As if his days forever should remain?
Sith all that in this world is great or gay,
Doth as a vapor vanish and decay."

In a very interesting book, called "Shadows on the Wall," by that talented and well-beloved citizen of Baltimore, John H. Hewitt, the following passage occurs: —

"Not less distinguished, but in a different way, stands out the name of Edwin Booth before his countrymen and the world. He was a comely lad, as I remember him, dressed in a Spanish cloak (among the first to display that style), giving promise of the man he has turned out to be. Inheriting his father's genius for the mimic stage, he has achieved the first rank upon it, and it has been his good fortune to have lived in an era of larger prices and more numerous audiences. He is so far different from his father, in style and execution, that his greatest successes have been achieved in different rôles; and while he stands unsurpassed in 'Hamlet,' he will not find fault with an old friend of Junius Brutus Booth for standing by *him* as the greatest *Richard*, *Sir Giles*, and *Iago*, that ever trod the American boards. He is still young enough to have a long career of success and usefulness before him. His fame is already the property of his country and cannot be taken from him."

Edwin Booth's education was commenced under the care of Miss Susan Hyde, a young lady whose capabilities were unanimously acknowledged in the neighborhood of "Old Town." Hers was one of those old-fashioned schools for girls and boys now almost unknown, where the rudiments of a sound education were well inculcated, and where the gentle mistress presided as the Minerva of her little circle. Miss Hyde

is at present the Secretary of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, and a fervent admirer of the genius of her distinguished pupil, who holds her in affectionate remembrance. Subsequently, Mr. Booth placed his son with an old Frenchman, a West-Indian naval officer, Louis Dugas, who had gathered around him a few young persons in their teens. He afterward went to a university, and studied at intervals of time with a Mr. Kearney, who wrote all his own school-books and encouraged dramatic representations among his boys. On one occasion Edwin and John S. Clarke, dressed in the white linen trousers and black jackets then in fashion, enacted or recited, with appropriate gestures, the quarrel scene of *Brutus* and *Cassius*. The elder Booth entered the crowded school-room unobserved, and, placing himself on the corner of a bench near the door, witnessed and enjoyed the performance.

Edwin began to travel with his father on one of those periodical tours which it was customary for him to make, and relates, as among the earliest of his theatrical reminiscences, the first appearance in Boston of the now famous William Warren. Mr. Booth, after his performance of *Shylock* at the Howard Athenæum, seated himself with Edwin among the audience to witness Mr. Warren's acting of *Jacques Strop* in the play of "Robert Macaire." It was an exceptional thing for him to make one of the auditory, but the débutant was a favorite of his; he always manifested great interest in his career, and seemed to be thoroughly pleased with his performance on that evening. Between these protracted theatrical tours Edwin usually resumed his school duties in Baltimore.

He played the violin well, which he had learned under Signor Picioli, and he amused his father by thrumming the banjo, which was becoming a fashionable instrument and had been taught him by a clever negro musician. He accompanied the banjo by singing the native melodies in the broad accent of the Southern negro.

He was envied by his companions because of these trips with his father; but their novelty soon lost all charm for him, and the monotony of school life would have been preferable to the arduous task of watching the health and caring for the safety of his eccentric, though kind-hearted sire. It was a duty requiring the patience and endurance of a woman; but Mrs. Booth, no longer young or strong, was compelled to place the charge into her son's hands; while he, an excitable, nervously organized youth, was often unequal to bear half that was required of him. Sleepless nights and lonely days are not the proper lot of boyhood, yet many such painful experiences were woven into the early life of Edwin Booth. While considering the love he bore his father, and recalling his slight figure, with his imaginative mind sensitively alive to the horrible, particularly impressed perhaps by the great responsibility devolving upon him, we can enter fully into the painfulness of the anecdotes that follow. Stopping once at the Pemberton House in Boston, one of those old hotels built with a square courtyard in the centre after the manner of some ancient Continental inns, a curious incident occurred. Around one part of the ground floor were stables; adjoining these, and opening into Mr. Booth's room, was a dark, unventilated

cupboard, unfitted for use, because of the powerful stable odor, which the actor, however, firmly contended was conducive to health.

One night, returning to his rooms physically exhausted by a heavy performance, he could not rest, and insisted on going into the streets to roam about. Edwin remonstrated with him in vain, — offered to play and sing for him, tried to interest him in other topics than those of the stage; but, finding every effort defeated, he stood up boldly and said, "You shall *not* go out." Trembling at his own temerity, for he knew his feebleness in comparison with his powerful, thick-set father, he was astonished at the result. Mr. Booth gave him one long stare, then vanished into the dark closet, securing the door on the inner side. He remained in darkness and silence for a long time, no entreaty, coaxing, or threat being able to elicit a sound from him, until Edwin, who had endured the greatest distress of mind, fearing that he could not longer exist in that airless, stifling chamber, if indeed he were not already dead, was about to run for help; when his father opened the door, and walking sternly across the room undressed himself, and without speaking went to bed.

In Louisville, on another occasion, after the night's performance of "Richard III.," which he had acted splendidly, Mr. Booth started for home; but, moved by a sudden impulse, he changed his mind, preferring to walk the streets alone. In vain Edwin persuaded him to go to the hotel and rest. Mr. Booth, finding that his son would not leave him, darted off in a contrary direction, and walked rapidly until he came to a long

covered market, which he entered, and began pacing up and down. From one end of the place to the other their walk was kept up without pause until daylight. Edwin soon became exhausted with fatigue, but his father, seemingly untired, would at times slacken his pace abruptly, then start off with increased rapidity, Edwin falling in with his gait as it changed, sometimes angry, and again ready to laugh at the ludicrousness of the situation. Not a syllable had been spoken by either, when the elder pedestrian was at last silently impelled to go home to his bed.

Other occurrences, partaking more of the painful than the ludicrous, could not fail to cloud the youth of one who felt his responsibility as great as his affection.

William Winter says: —

"Between them there existed from the first a profound and fervent, though silent and undemonstrative sympathy. As Edwin grew up, his close companionship seemed more and more to be needed and desired by the parent. . . . As a boy, he is represented to have been grave beyond his years, observant, thoughtful, and rather melancholy, but wise in knowledge of his surroundings, and strong in reticence and self-poise. He was accustomed to accompany his father as attendant and dresser, but in fact he was the chosen monitor and guardian of that wild genius, and possessed more influence over him than was exercised by any other person. This association, operating upon hereditary talent, wrought its inevitable consequence in making Edwin Booth an actor. The strange life that he saw and led — a life in which fictitious emotions, imaginative influ-

ences, and every-day trivialities are so singularly blended — exerted its customary charm upon a youthful, sensitive, and irrepressible nature, at once luring him towards the stage, and preparing him for its profession."

On the 10th of September, 1849, Edwin Booth made his first appearance on any stage, in the character of *Tressel*, at the Boston Museum, under the following circumstances. Mr. Thoman, who was prompter and actor, was arranging some detail of the play, and becoming irritable at having so much to do, said abruptly to Edwin, who was standing near him, "This is too much work for one man; *you* ought to play *Tressel*," and he induced him to undertake the part. On the eventful night the elder Booth dressed for *Richard III.* was seated with his feet upon a table in his dressing-room. Calling his son before him, like a severe pedagogue or inquisitor, he interrogated him in that hard, laconic style he could so seriously assume: —

"Who was *Tressel?*"

"A messenger from the field of Tewksbury."

"What was his mission?"

"To bear the news of the defeat of the king's party."

"How did he make the journey?"

"On horseback."

"Where are your spurs?"

Edwin glanced quickly down, and said he had not thought of them.

"Here, take mine."

Edwin unbuckled his father's spurs, and fastened them on his own boots. His part being ended on the stage, he found his father still sitting in the dressing-room, apparently engrossed in thought.

"Have you done well?" he asked.

"I think so," replied Edwin.

"Give me my spurs," rejoined his father; and obediently young *Tressel* replaced the spurs upon *Gloucester's* feet.

In the summer of 1850 Edwin and J. S. Clarke gave a dramatic reading at the Court-House in Belair at the solicitation of a number of collegians and residents of that village. As the request for the entertainment was unanimous, it was cordially responded to, and the two youths mounted their horses and rode twenty-five miles over the roughest of country roads under an August sun to obtain printed programmes and tickets in Baltimore. Mr. Booth was as elated as themselves with the undertaking, and, happy in expectation, the two friends rode back the next day, and immediately commenced arranging a large room in the county court-house, which had been offered for their convenience. The doors and windows were instantly besieged by an eager throng of rustics, who were anxious to witness the preparations for the great show, evidently expecting that a circus or some wonderful magician was to exhibit, as nothing more elevated than such performances had ever been given in Belair so publicly and on so grand a scale.

An old negro was sent out to post the bills, and as the young men rode in from the Farm on that eventful evening they discovered, to their intense chagrin, that every bill had been placed upside down. The house was full and fashionable, — the audience observing the decorous regulation of their meeting-houses by sepa-

rating at the door and seating themselves in perfect silence, the gentlemen on one side of the room, the ladies on the other. Order was strictly observed, and the performance was allowed to proceed to its conclusion without the slightest interruption of applause or dissent.

The programme will be found on the following page.

During the evening they sang a number of negro melodies with blackened faces, using appropriate dialect, and accompanying their vocal attempts with the somewhat inharmonious banjo and bones.

In 1851 his father's being announced for *Richard III.* at the National Theatre, New York, led indirectly to Edwin's attempting that character. Mr. Booth had a partiality for the old theatres in which his first successes had been achieved, and his preference was extended also to the old, dingy, incommodious hotels, wherein he submitted to every inconvenience rather than patronize new establishments. On one particular night, as he and his son were preparing to go to the theatre, he suddenly changed his mood and refused to start, saying that he was ill and unable to perform. Edwin suggested that he should rouse himself for the effort, at least present himself at the theatre, thinking that when within the building he would forego this strange resolve. He reminded his father how well he had rehearsed and how well in health he had been all day; but no argument could move him. "What will they do without you, father?" the son exclaimed in despair. "Who can they substitute at the last moment?" "Go act it yourself," was the curt response. After some further altercation the father insisted that

GRAND DRAMATIC FESTIVAL

AT THE COURT-HOUSE IN BELAIR,

Saturday, August 2.

In compliance with the request of several gentlemen,

MR. EDWIN BOOTH

respectfully informs the inhabitants of Belair and vicinity, that he will give one entertainment as above, in conjunction with

MR. J. S. CLARKE.

The performance will consist of

SHAKSPERIAN READINGS, ETC.

PART FIRST.

Selections from RICHARD III.

Richard III. . . . . Mr. E. Booth.

Selections from MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Shylock . . . . . Mr. J. S. Clarke.

The celebrated Dagger Scene from MACBETH.

Macbeth . . . . . Mr. E. Booth.

Selections from Kotzebue's STRANGER.

The Stranger . . . . . Mr. J. S. Clarke.

Hamlet's Soliloquy on Death . . . . . Mr. E. Booth.

Selections from Otway's tragedy of VENICE PRESERVED.

Jaffier . . . . . Mr. J. S. Clarke.

Selections from RICHELIEU.

Cardinal Richelieu . . . . . Mr. E. Booth.

The great Quarrel Scene from JULIUS CÆSAR.

Brutus . . . . . Mr. E. Booth.

Cassius . . . . . Mr. J. S. Clarke.

his son should assume the character of *Richard III.* on that night. The carriage had been waiting for a long while at the door, with the trunk of stage-dresses strapped upon it. There was no time to be lost, and Edwin sprang into the vehicle and drove furiously to the theatre, where, on arrival, he encountered John R. Scott. In great dismay he related his father's sudden freak. "No matter," replied Scott calmly, "*you* act it." In surprise Edwin exclaimed, "That is what my father said, and what he sent me here to do; but it is impossible, — I cannot." Entering behind the scenes, he was quickly surrounded by others, who urged him to "try," promising to help him in every way, to make an apology to the audience, etc. It resulted in these excited people dressing him in his father's clothes, which, for his slender figure, were "a world too wide," while some one with book in hand heard him repeat the soliloquy. All was bustle and confusion behind the curtain; the theatre in front was densely crowded, and the young unwilling substitute was hurried to the stage entrance. At his appearance the applause rang out in a wild burst, but as suddenly ceased. No apology had been made, and in astonished silence the spectators allowed the play to begin and to proceed. He, who had absorbed into his own being every word, look, and tone of his father, soon wrung from the audience a gratified applause. John R. Scott showed great concern and uneasiness throughout the play, fearing the breaking down of his young *Richard;* but in answer to the prolonged call at the close, he led him proudly before the curtain and introduced him as "the

worthy scion of a noble stock," adding, *sotto voce*, "I'll wager they don't know what that means."

On Edwin's return to his hotel he was questioned coldly by his father as to his success. The elder Booth was found by the son apparently exactly as he had left him, unchanged in mood or position; but it is believed now by Edwin that he had witnessed the whole of the performance of *Richard*, as well as that of *Tressel* on a previous occasion, and was not dissatisfied with the result.

Edwin Booth soon after entered into an engagement with Theodore Barton of Baltimore to play any part assigned him for a salary of six dollars a week. Although he had acted in tragedies with success, considering his youth and want of training, yet in minor characters and in inferior plays he proved awkward, confused, and apparently a failure. He once attempted a part in pantomime with Madame Ciocca; had graceful pose to assume and airy trivial manners to simulate; but he did everything wrong, filled the French actress with horror at his *gaucherie*, and called down upon himself her abuse in broken English. In the year 1852 the elder Booth went to New York, intending to start for California, accompanied by his son Junius, but in consequence of illness he returned to his home in Baltimore. He sailed in the next steamer from New York, taking Edwin with him, whom he had previously arranged to leave at home. In one week from the date of starting they arrived at Aspinwall; then proceeded up the Chagres River to Gorgona on a flat-boat which conveyed the passengers and their luggage.

They slept one night at Gorgona, and proceeded to cross the Isthmus on mules. At night they slept in a hut, on wine-casks and trunks, covered by their blankets; the only lady of the party occupied a hammock, and each man lay with a hand under his pillow, holding a pistol. Edwin, sleepless, watched the natives sharpening their *macheetos*, — or long knives which they used to cut the tall grass in front of them as they journeyed on foot, — and vainly tried to understand their conversation, which was carried on in low whispers. The rats ran about undisturbed during the night, and the whole party rose in the morning, unrefreshed by their rest, and proceeded on mules. The elder Booth prophesied that there would be a railroad across the Isthmus before many years, and confidently anticipated the time when a canal would connect the two oceans.

After an engagement of two weeks in San Francisco, Mr. Booth proceeded to Sacramento, in which city, on the occasion of his benefit, he acted *Richard III.* The following night J. B. Booth, Junior, for *his* benefit, played *Othello*, and his father, *Iago;* and the following night being Edwin's benefit, he acted *Jaffier* to his father's *Pierre.* Arrayed in black for his part of *Jaffier*, Edwin perceived his father seated on the steps of his dressing-room, who at his approach observed, "You look like *Hamlet;* why did you not act *Hamlet* for your benefit?" Edwin carelessly replied, "If I ever have another, I *will*."

Disappointed at finding no theatre in San Francisco suitable for the production of his plays, — the new theatre progressing only in the imagination of the people,

and the state of the country being discouraging in every respect, — Mr. Booth determined to start for New York; and, being assured that Edwin had resolved to become an actor, he would not consent to allow him to accompany him home, but advised him to remain in California and perfect himself in his profession. Although proverbially lavish of money in cases of need or charity, and never pressing for ready or even just payment of a loan, it seemed harsh that he should have demanded of his son Junius, who had not profited greatly by the transaction, the full amount for his services, according to their agreement; but he had great regard for the law of equity, even with his own family, his severity therein being a principle, as with *Hotspur*: —

> "I 'll give thrice so much land
> To any well-deserving friend;
> But in the way of bargain, mark ye me,
> I 'll cavil on the ninth part of a hair."

The prosperous state of theatrical business in California was most encouraging when the offer had been made and accepted between son and father; but, by one of those sudden reverses in financial matters that occur in newly settled countries, an unaccountable depression had changed the whole aspect of affairs almost upon arrival of the veteran tragedian. The hard times so long threatening now burst in terrible earnest. Men who had been wealthy a few weeks previous, ready to squander, to lend, or to give, now became hard, suspicious, and grasping. Edwin, in this dilemma, accepted a proposition of Mr. D. W. Waller to accompany him

to Nevada, Cal. At that place he acted *Iago* for the first time, and played alternately in Nevada and Grass Valley.

J. B. Booth, Jr., had said to Edwin, at parting, "Put a slug [which was a large octagonal gold piece of fifty dollars] in the bottom of your trunk, forget you have it, and when things are at the worst, bring out the slug." The advice was followed; but the worst soon came, for theatrical affairs were in a most disastrous condition at Nevada. Ruin and starvation were the evils that oppressed all minds, and now the snow fell unceasingly until the travellers were completely cut off from the rest of the world. The theatre had been closed for a fortnight in consequence of the distressed state of these towns.

One night, as Edwin was passing along a dark road where the houses had literally been undermined by the gold-diggers, and great gulches yawned amidst the slush of snow and mud, rendering pedestrianism unsafe, he came face to face with a man carrying a lantern. By its glimmer he recognized the actor, George Spear, familiarly called "Old Spudge" (now an inmate of the Forrest Home, Philadelphia), who cried out, "Hollo! Ted, is that you? There is a mail in," he continued, "and a letter for *you*." The snow had prevented the arrival of the post for a long while past, but a courier had at last broken through the almost impenetrable mass, and on horseback arrived with the long-delayed mail-bag.

"What news is there?" asked Edwin carelessly. "Not good news for you, my boy." At this reply the

lad seemed to detect the fatal truth, either by the accent or hesitation of the old actor, for in terror he exclaimed, "Spear, is my father dead?" Gently as possible the sad story was told him, and the old man, who had come out to break the intelligence, now led the half-distracted son to the hotel, where the waiting group of friends endeavored to calm his sorrow. He was stunned by the blow, and they could not understand how deep his grief was, or how he blamed himself for having allowed his father to undertake the homeward journey alone.

Poverty and utter "hard times" settled upon the actors in desperate reality. They were helpless, and dreaded the day when they should be unable even to obtain credit; the cold had become intense, and the snow continued to fall without intermission.

Every man — ruffian, gambler, laborer, and scholar — was on terms of equality at that time in Nevada; for as Mr. B. L. Farjeon remarks, in his interesting story of "The Shadows on the Snow Ranges," "so small a matter as one being born a gentleman and another a common laborer was here of no account."

A hopeless group stood at a street corner one day, bewailing their condition, when it was casually suggested that they should walk to Marysville. The worst that could befall in the adventure would be no worse than the misery awaiting them here. Two or three men accepted the proposition of one who immediately constituted himself "leader." An actor named Barry, and Burridge, a musician, whose violin had comprised the entire orchestra at the theatre, decided to join the party.

Edwin, sauntering leisurely up to this group, was told of their intention, and consented to go with them without reflecting upon the fatigue and exposure of the undertaking. Although of an age when meagre fare and privation might seriously have undermined a constitution never robust, he ventured to tramp a distance of fifty miles across the mountains, the foremost man breaking the road through the drifts. Two days of walking through heavy snow brought them at night to Marysville, where the pedestrians disbanded.

Edwin borrowed ten dollars of an acquaintance, with which he secured passage to Sacramento. On arrival, he found that the city had been destroyed partially by fire, and that later floods had set in and swept away nearly everything that had escaped the flames.

Letters from home awaited him at San Francisco, where he had gone at once, acquainting him with the details of his father's death, in which his mother advised him and his brother to remain in California if they considered it best for their theatrical future, adding that their coming home would not be of any avail; their father was buried, and the family intended to live at the Farm.

J. B. Booth, the younger, at that time was co-manager with the Messrs. Chapman, and was able to give Edwin an engagement, but could make no agreement allowing him a fixed salary, business being still in a precarious state. With this poor prospect of earning a living, and his present penniless condition weighing on his spirits, he met an acquaintance who opportunely remembered that Edwin had once lent

him twenty dollars, and who was now eager to cancel the debt. This state of affairs ought to have sharpened any man's memory, but Edwin failed to recall the loan until circumstances related by his debtor brought it to his mind; for it had been made in those days of plenty, not long departed, when no one asked a favor or a loan in vain. Elated by the possession of so much gold, he thought how pleasant it was to be able to send part of it to those who had befriended him, and in whose debt he was, and how sumptuously too he would fare for a time on the remainder. Walking away with an elasticity in his gait, new to him at that time of depression, he met a companion with whom he turned into a gambling saloon, one of those crowded and conveniently located places so numerous in those days. Carelessly watching men throw down their gold, and in one sweep of the hand amassing hundreds, he who had never attempted a game before, and was ignorant of the mysteries of *vingt-et-un*, staked his twenty-dollar gold piece only to see it deftly swept away with others to fill the pockets of some luckier man. In despair he left the place and has never since been tempted to gamble.

Several months later the scene-painter, Fairchild, who was to have a benefit, obtained from him a promise to act *Richard III.* J. B. Booth tried to dissuade him from the undertaking, advising him to become better acquainted with the public, and to play more romantic parts suited to his age and appearance, rather than undertake so arduous a rôle. Edwin, however, resolved to make the attempt. A crowded house and an enthusiastic audience received him; he acted

finely, and was told afterward that throughout the performance a tall dark man stood behind the scenes watching him intently. This proved to be Ferdinand Ewer, then editor of the *Pioneer*, a monthly magazine, (but at present a minister of the gospel in New York,) who on that occasion penned the first criticism that had ever been written of Edwin Booth's acting. The great success of this performance induced the managers to deviate from their original intention, that of devoting their theatre to comedy; and they proposed to Booth the production of other tragedies, particularly of "Hamlet." He steadily resisted every inducement to perform that character, but personated many others with great success, among which were *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Shylock*, *Richard III.*, and *Othello*. Finally a benefit was tendered him, on which occasion he played *Hamlet*. The words once spoken carelessly to his father had assumed the sacredness of a promise: —

> "Thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmixed with baser matter."

One can imagine with what intensity of feeling, as he thought of his father, he spoke the lines, which had acquired for him a powerful significance, —

> "He was a man, take him for all in all,
> I shall not look upon his like again."

A conservative spirit seems to have taken possession of the adventurous people of California, for they cultivated a feeling of exclusiveness, which led them almost to ignore the existence of what had become to them

the old world, designated colloquially "the States." They would push onward to Australia and distant parts, but rarely turned homeward even to better their condition; hence it is not so remarkable that no enterprising manager had, at the height of Edwin Booth's popularity, with the name of the father still warm in the hearts of playgoers in "the States," induced him to return and establish himself at once in the position he afterward attained. Instead of this, his name was put in the bills when the "business" was on the decline, and it very rarely proved ineffectual to draw large audiences; but meanwhile he was drifting into a kind of stock-star, on a pittance of salary.

Mrs. Catherine Forrest Sinclair came from the East and opened the new theatre on its completion, Edwin playing secondary parts to her. Mr. James Murdock and Laura Keene followed, the latter attributing her failure to "Edwin Booth's bad acting." There sprang up between this lady and himself a mutual dislike which culminated in something like hatred; but the duties of theatrical life exacted that they should appear upon the stage together.

Mr. D. C. Anderson, a kind, genial gentleman and actor, congratulated himself and Edwin, whom he learned to love as a son, upon their good resolutions to be temperate, virtuous, and domestic. They bought a plot of ground, seventy-five by two hundred feet in extent, which they satirically called the "Ranch," and in a small house of two rooms they lived, doing all their own work, domestic and menial. This veteran actor remarked recently, in speaking to the writer of Edwin

Booth, that "he believed him to be the noblest specimen of man God ever created." Years and changes had not diminished his admiration for the boy whom he had so lovingly taken under his protection.

In the year 1854 James Stark, a famous tragedian of California, had returned from Australia with glowing accounts of its prosperity and wealth. Mr. Anderson urged Booth to make a professional visit to that country, and eventually arrangements were made to that effect. The idea prevailed that there were no actresses in Australia, and as Mr. Anderson had been informed that Miss Laura Keene was desirous of going there, without letting her intention be known to certain persons in San Francisco, he entered into an engagement with her to act with Booth. Miss Keene, asserting that tragedy was her forte, that she acted comedy merely through necessity, and would adopt tragedy gladly if offered the opportunity, readily consented. It was settled between Mr. Anderson and the lady that she was to go on board the ship at night, and they were to sail at four o'clock in the morning. The captain missed the tide and was obliged to delay until the afternoon. In the mean time, as afterward transpired, the captain's wife, who had been a governess, an actress, and later a lodging-house keeper, was commanded by her husband to get a fresh wardrobe, let her house, and sail with him to Australia, whereupon Mr. Booth would be compelled to engage her in default of other female support. A Mr. Evans, moved by the same speculative idea, brought his wife aboard; the three ladies concealed themselves in their respective cabins,

and the scene, when they met and realized the absurdity of the position, was as amusing as any in which the *dramatis personæ* had ever acted on a mimic stage.

On arriving at Sydney, the destination of the vessel, Booth entered into an engagement with Manager Torning and played *Shylock* to Miss Keene's *Portia*. His performance of *Richard III.* was enthusiastically received. They went thence to Melbourne, where but few performances were given; the dull state of every kind of business materially affecting the theatres. Booth had made the acquaintance of Mr. Hamilton and his wife (who was a daughter of Thomas Hamblin, at one time a manager of the Bowery Theatre, New York, and a very celebrated actor), and an old Irish comedian named "Clem" White. These people were unable to obtain engagements and undecided as to their future course; however, at the last moment, they determined to return to San Francisco, Edwin accompanying them.

Acting companies, leaving the last-mentioned city *en route* for Australia, not unfrequently stopped at the Sandwich Islands. The vessel on this occasion for some reason put in at Honolulu, and Booth and Mr. Anderson decided to give an entertainment there rather than go back to San Francisco without money. An agreement was effected between the five professionals, and the Royal Hawaiian Theatre was secured, for which Booth paid all the money he possessed, fifty dollars, in advance, for one month's rent. They were joined by two actors, scarcely less needy than themselves, who had been left at the Island by a strolling company some months before. The theatre was constructed by sev-

eral houses being thrown into one building, and the company, comprising seven persons, slept in the theatre, which saved the rent for lodgings. One of the actors, Mr. Roe, was a short, thick-set Dutchman, of unprepossessing countenance, who had been accustomed to play female rôles, and who undertook the same line to support Booth, "doubling" the characters of the *Duke of Norfolk* and *Duchess of York*. The King of the Sandwich Islands had lately died, and, the court being in mourning, his successor was unable to attend the theatre publicly; but, expressing a desire to witness Booth's performance of *Richard III.*, his Majesty was accommodated behind the scenes. The arm-chair used for the stage-throne was placed at the wing, with Edwin's theatrical robe thrown over it, and the king seated himself upon it; his escort, who were a Frenchman and a huge Kanaka, the latter wearing a military jacket, white trousers, and a long sword, stood by his side. Edwin was compelled to trouble the king for the throne in the coronation scene, and his Majesty good-naturedly stood until it was returned for his use. Kamehameha IV. was an educated gentleman, speaking English fluently; he told Edwin that when he was a little boy he had seen the elder Booth perform *Richard III.* at the Chatham Theatre in New York.

A letter from Mrs. Sinclair greeted Booth on his arrival at San Francisco, offering him an engagement to play with her at her own theatre, the Metropolitan; he accepted, and his personation of *Benedict* to Mrs. Sinclair's *Rosalind* was enthusiastically received by a large audience. The "business," at first most gratify-

ing, began to decline, in consequence of which he accepted an offer to act at the American Theatre in the same city, where he performed nightly to crowded houses. Seceding from this theatre, he went with a company to Sacramento, enrolling himself as "juvenile man"; but, the business proving a disappointment to the manager, he engaged one of his company to enact his own parts and assume the juvenile characters as well, so that Booth was discharged in order to curtail the expenses. Mr. Sedley and Mrs. Sinclair were about securing a theatre in Sacramento for the production of some very attractive pieces, and now made him an offer to become a joint-lessee with themselves and a Mr. Venua. Accordingly, a shabby little theatre in a back street was leased, where the play of "The Marble Heart" was produced for the first time in America. Mrs. Sinclair distinguished herself by her performance of *Marco;* but the character of *Volage* was claimed by Sedley and Booth, and finally decided by the toss of a penny, falling to Mr. Sedley. "Fortunately for all concerned," Booth remarked, "for he acted the part finely; much better than I could have done it." Edwin took the character of *Raphael,* in which he made a marked success; and, according to theatrical technicality, he *created* the part. The long-continued success of "The Marble Heart" was the means of closing the Forrest Theatre from which he had been discharged. Notwithstanding the increasing popularity of the piece, the management gave up the lease of the house and travelled through other towns to produce it. The combination did not meet with the anticipated success,

however, and after visiting several towns it ultimately disbanded at San Francisco.

Booth now joined a company of eight or ten persons to go through the mining towns; he travelled on his own horse, while the manager and his wife, the company, scenery, and wardrobe, were transported in a large covered wagon. Some of the "towns" through which they passed were composed of a few huts, the theatre being usually a hall over a shop; other places contained respectable houses, and occasionally a small convenient theatre was to be obtained. The standard bill with this company was the "Iron Chest" and "Katherine and Petruchio." Booth's dress-basket was covered with canvas, painted to represent an "iron chest," and served for that important "property." The promiscuous population of the mines and huts who could enjoy Shaksperian productions and the plays of the best authors was not to be treated slightingly. No curtailment or glossing over of speeches would be permitted by the people, who walked miles to have their evening's amusement conscientiously given.

After acting in several of the mining towns, and at one place being compelled to leave his horse in payment of a debt, Booth arrived penniless in Sacramento. He there formed the acquaintance of Mr. Butler, an architect, who manifested great interest in his career, and urged him not to waste any more time in California, but to return to the States. He told him that Boothroyd Fairclough was attempting to take the position that should be his; that now, while his father's memory was dear to the American heart, he alone should assume

the vacant place. He had but one reply, — the want of money; although in his own mind he did not aspire to equal his father or consider himself worthy or capable of doing so.

That his impecuniosity should not deter Edwin Booth from asserting his inherited right to fame, this enthusiastic friend arranged a benefit for him. It proved a great success. He made a farewell speech before a sympathetic audience, and was presented with a pin of California gold representing a wrist and hand, the finger and thumb of which held a valuable diamond. The next day his debts were cancelled, and every bill paid; but he found by these proceedings that his money was entirely expended. Mr. Butler suggested another benefit, which Edwin opposed. Mr. Butler insisted, however, claiming that the enthusiasm of the previous occasion would warrant it, and he cleverly arranged that actors should come from San Francisco to lend their services. The second farewell was given to an overflowing house, and Booth was to leave for San Francisco the following day. Crowds assembled to see him go on board, the band from the theatre was present to testify good-will, the captain made the young actor stand in a prominent position to be visible to those who wished him again and again "God speed." Confusion, noisy farewells, and music filled the air; nothing was wanting to complete the sense of satisfaction excepting Mr. Butler with the night's receipts. It was a harassing ordeal for the recipient of this generous ovation, but good wishes will not fill an empty pocket; and, as Rousseau says, "A crust of bread and

a bit of money are worth more than God bless you." Fortunately, at the very point of the given time when the gang-plank was about to be hauled in, a man's voice vociferously calling for delay was heard, and in a moment Mr. Butler, wildly gesticulating, rushed amid the crowd with the missing, and by him until then forgotten, bag of gold.

At San Francisco Booth had a farewell benefit, acting *Lear* for the first time. He crossed the Isthmus by the railroad which was then finished, and engaged his passage on the "Illinois," — the same steamer in which he had left home with his father.

He had sent an agent ahead to make engagements for him, with the strict injunction to avoid the Front Street Theatre, Baltimore, but to negotiate an opening at the Holliday, in the same city. On arrival, he found that he was announced to appear at the Front Street Theatre, engagements in New York having been entirely forgotten.

He went at once to the Farm in Maryland, where he met with a hearty welcome. The country lads who carried in his trunks shook their heads knowingly at the weight of the supposed contents, saying, "*He*'s from the diggin's." He had come back older in experience only, for he looked like a boy still, and very fragile; his wild black eyes and long locks gave him an air of melancholy. He had the gentle dignity and inherent grace that one attributes to a young prince, yet he was merry, cheerful, and boyish in disposition, as one can imagine *Hamlet* to have been in the days before the tragedy was enacted in the orchard.

He thoroughly enjoyed the rest among his own family at the Farm, and in a short time opened at the Front Street Theatre, Baltimore, in the character of *Richard III.*

He also acted under J. T. Ford's management at Washington and Richmond, Va., Joseph Jefferson being the stage-manager at the last-named city. It was here that he made the acquaintance of Miss Mary Devlin, whom he afterwards married. On a tour arranged for him by his agent he played in the principal Southern and Southwestern cities, establishing himself as an universal favorite. As previously mentioned, he conceived that after the glow of excitement consequent on his assuming the characters of the elder Booth should have abated, he must naturally sink into the position of leading man at one of the New York theatres. He was diffident of his own power, yet from the first he set himself earnestly to eradicate from his acting every tinge of what he considered an imitation of his father. Schlegel says: "Mere imitation is always fruitless; even what we borrow from others, to assume a true, practical shape, must, as it were, be born again within us. Of what avail is all foreign imitation? Art cannot exist without nature, and man can give nothing to his fellow-man but himself."

However one might grow to love even the peculiarities of a favorite, yet it was these very mannerisms, effective and graceful though they were in the elder Booth, that the younger strove studiously to avoid, for he knew they would be quickly detected and used in the criticisms against him; but there were that same

upright bearing and rapidity of graceful motion, there were tones of voice, clarion-like, sonorous, and inexpressibly sweet, that no art could copy: nature herself transmitted them; they were her dower. He never was a copyist of his father. A jealous analyst could discover, even at that early stage of his theatrical career, evidences of an originality in conception and portrayal which he asserted would attain softness and elegance with the thoughtfulness of years. This conscientious student of men, of nature, and of Shakspere has well fulfilled the prediction.

Laura Keene, as if to confirm the opinion he held of his own ability, offered him the position of leading man at her theatre in New York; but his continued successes had aroused the ambition of others, if not of himself, and it was decided that he should hold his place as a "star." As an incentive to that ambition came an offer from Thomas Barry, a veteran manager of old Park fame, for him to appear at the Boston Theatre. In spite of all that he had achieved he was not satisfied of his own merit, for he still lacked the indorsement of Boston criticism which he considered necessary. Through a dearth of tragedians, comedy reigned in New York; managers had conceived the idea that tragedy was ruinous to business, and the fancy of the day was to ignore Shakspere. William E. Burton, the comedian, was at that time the manager of the Metropolitan, afterward known as the Winter Garden Theatre, and through his business manager he arranged with Booth's agent to bring him to the Metropolitan when his Boston engagement should have ended. In ac-

cepting the proposal, he emphatically stipulated that he would open with "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," reserving his reason for doing so. The elder Booth had so essentially identified himself with the character of *Richard III.* that Edwin wished to avoid a comparison which he felt would be detrimental to himself; and moreover, in the quiet scenes of *Sir Giles*, he could feel his way, gradually centre the interest of his audience, and, while working on their sympathy, reserve his force for the powerful culmination. He would be modestly announced, — no loud-sounding allusion to his inherited name and fame, — for he designed to win, not startle, his audiences.

He proceeded to Boston, and opened as *Sir Giles.* It was a cold, dreary night, and he had a thin house. Many white-haired men were in the parquette, which contained more of the passing than the present generation. On the entrance of *Allworth*, the modest personator of that character was startled by vigorous applause from the audience, which, with the laugh that followed on discovery of the mistake, succeeded in taking away his power of speech. When *Sir Giles* appeared loud and prolonged applause greeted him; then (as he described it) the people braced themselves, self-satisfied, in their seats, as if to say, Now, young man, let us see what you can do for yourself. The play proceeded quietly until the fourth act, when the player was on his mettle, for he felt that evening to be the turning-point in his career, —

> "This is the night
> That either makes me, or fordoes me quite."

This Boston indorsement was to decide his future; and with a nervous calm he reserved himself for the last great scenes. The effect was electrifying, the call genuine and spontaneous; he knew his power, and felt that he was safe. The next day his pronounced success was universally acknowledged, and the press was unanimous in his praise. No other city had as yet adopted the custom of giving matinées, but the Saturday morning performance had long been the established rule in Boston, where all places of amusement were closed on Saturday nights. Booth's engagement, which had been in every respect successful, terminated with a matinée, during which his agent had brought him a telegraphic despatch from the New York acting-manager: "Mr. Booth announced for *Richard III.* next Monday. Seats going like hot cakes."

Annoyed and disappointed at this violation of his express orders, he left Boston in no enviable mood, and arrived in New York on Sunday morning. In shame and indignation at the vulgar bombast which would be attributed to him, he read on every available space his own name, coupled with such glaring sentences as, "Hope of the living drama!" "Son of the Great Tragedian!" "Richard 's himself again!" and that hackneyed allusion to the "mantle falling on worthy shoulders," which poetic garment never so sadly hampered his individuality as now; for if, as it is said, "every man builds his own monument," then for him who is "born great" there can be little scope for ambition or achievement. Yet it was with more earnestness than ever that he studied for himself the hidden beauties of Shakspere,

whereas but for these difficulties to surmount he might have been less close a student, less meditative a scholar. He obeyed a Baconian precept, and read "not to contradict nor to believe, but to weigh and consider."

He opened on the evening of the 4th of May, 1857. Expectation was at its height to witness the performance of this well-advertised prodigy of genius, whose serious and modest demeanor, however, did not coincide with the idea of the vainglorious young actor who was coming to demand rather than deserve applause. He pleased thoroughly by his Spartan-like action, his grave and sententious speech, no less than by his grace and passion; and, in spite of glaring town-posters, his name on calendars, cards, and shop ornaments, he gained a hold on the theatre-going public which he never forfeited or lost. In the company were many distinguished names: John Gilbert, Daniel Setchell, Mark Smith, Charles Fisher, and Lawrence Barrett.

In the autumn of the same year Booth visited Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, Memphis, Mobile, Montgomery, St. Louis, and Louisville.

In the following winters he travelled through the Southern and Southwestern States. On one occasion he was crowned with laurel, and after a representation of *Richelieu*, in answer to an enthusiastic call, the curtain rose, and the stage became literally strewn with garlands and bouquets; to one of the latter was attached a leather bag containing five hundred dollars in gold. His first engagement in Chicago was at M'Vicker's Theatre, and at that time he made the acquaintance of his present wife, then a child.

A series of thoughtfully written criticisms appeared in the *New York Sunday Times* over the *nom de plume* of "Vagabond." These were subsequently collected and edited in book form by the author, Adam Badeau, who became during the civil war an aide-de-camp of General Grant, and afterward biographer of the soldier-President.

In the year 1857 Booth fulfilled an engagement at the Howard Athenæum, Boston, under the management of E. L. Davenport. Lawrence Barrett and John McCullough were in the company. At this period he began altering and revising certain of his plays, "Hamlet" especially occupying his attention. Costumes and scenery, as well as stage business, received his particular care, while a new reading would suggest itself or comprehension of a thought would develop fresh meaning to his active mind. These plays as arranged by him, with many embellishments, excisions, and curtailments, were the fruit of much serious labor and research, neither study, energy, nor expense being spared in their preparation. It was the conscientious effort of the actor to render his versions concise, clear, and authentic, without marring their beauty or deteriorating from their grandeur. This attractive series of "Edwin Booth's Prompt Books" was edited by William Winter in 1878, with preface, appendix, and observations by that gentleman, and relative quotations from criticisms by the best Shaksperian scholars.

During a lucrative engagement at New Orleans in 1858, Mr. Booth was the recipient of a costly service of plate consisting of a salver, pitcher, and two goblets.

At Charleston he was presented with a similar token of regard. In 1860 he married Miss Mary Devlin, who had retired from the stage the previous year; he then determined to travel less, leaving the Southern and Western States to his younger brother and confining himself to the Eastern cities. He had become the most popular tragedian in the United States. Edwin Forrest was waning in power, and Edwin Booth, now at the acme of a fame deservedly won, had not only in the opinion of friends, but in the estimation of the people, "achieved greatness!" That magnetic power which enchains the ear and rivets the eye was not an acquirement; no practice, study, or artifice could teach him that which was indisputably a gift and an inheritance; but custom and conscientious thought helped him not only to idealize but to subdue his nature and exalt his passions, so that he was in turn each person he portrayed.

An adaptation by Mr. Tom Taylor of "Le Roi s'Amuse," entitled "The Fool's Revenge," had been sent to Joseph Jefferson from England. He took it to Mrs. Booth, telling her to insist on Edwin's looking at it, the character being tragic and not suited to a comedian. Booth studied the part and performed it several times, but failed to satisfy himself with his rendition or clearly to demonstrate his own conception of the character. In this year, 1860, he acted in it with great success, however, in all the cities that he visited with the exception of New York. He now applied himself to reconsider the character, which he felt had not received justice from his interpretation, and finally made an alteration

of the last act. He performed *Bertuccio* at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, under Wheatley and Clarke's management. As he acted he seemed to realize the full force of the character, and for the first time he delineated satisfactorily to himself the perfect pathos and passion of the part.

Miss Charlotte Cushman and Edwin Booth gave ten performances at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, commencing Dec. 31, 1860. They played *Wolsey* and *Queen Katherine* in "Henry VIII.," *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, *Shylock* and *Portia*, *Katherine* and *Petruchio*, to crowded houses. Miss Cushman observed, "that, judging from Mr. Booth's rehearsal of *Macbeth*, he had a refined and very intellectual conception of the character; but she begged him to remember that *Macbeth* was the grandfather of all the Bowery villains." Booth differed from her on many points, and declined to depart from his own conception of the rôle.

In a discussion with Henry Tuckerman of New York, on the character of *Hamlet*, that gentleman, who had witnessed many of the old actors, observed to Booth that they all stood during the soliloquies, and inquired if it were not possible to alter this. On the next representation of "Hamlet," Booth, seated, began the soliloquy "To be, or not to be." Mr. Tuckerman, watching the play, could not conceive how *Hamlet* could rise from that chair with propriety and grace. When at the words, "to sleep, perchance to dream," after an instant of reflection, during which the mind of *Hamlet* had penetrated the eternal darkness vivid with dreams, he rose with the horror of that terrible "perchance"

stamped upon his features, continuing, "Ay, there 's the rub!" His friend was satisfied that the actor had caught the inspiration of the lines in that reflective pause. Booth also introduced sitting on the tomb in the graveyard when, with his face half buried on *Horatio's* shoulder, he speaks, as if to his own heart, the words, "What! the fair Ophelia?" His resting previously on the tomb is most natural and graceful, and, imbued with these qualities, it cannot fail to be effective.

During the summer of 1861, while on a fishing excursion with friends in the White Mountains, Booth received a letter from the agent of Mr. Buckstone inviting him to act in London at the Haymarket Theatre. He replied, accepting the offer, and prepared to sail for England. He left Boston with his wife in September of the same year. He was surprised when Mr. Buckstone informed him in London that a second letter asking him to defer the visit, as he was rather afraid of tragedy, had crossed him on the way. After much discussion Booth allowed himself to be overruled by the manager and consented to appear as *Shylock*. A lady who had spoken with enthusiasm to her circle of friends of the passion and fire of certain of his delineations confessed herself disappointed when he walked the stage, calm to indifference, and evidently annoyed at his support and his surroundings.

On this eventful night every one behind the scenes was more nervous and frightened than the untried actor. His fellow-players, with but few exceptions, were supercilious and disposed to treat the stranger with indignity. One of them was so positively certain of his being hissed

that he was scarcely able to conceal his disappointment at the result.

The prejudice did not extend, however, to Henry Howe or Henry Compton of the Haymarket company, for these gentlemen were particularly kind and sympathetic. His audiences were thin but enthusiastic, and many flattering critiques appeared upon his acting, none of which, however, he had the satisfaction of reading; only the malicious articles, unjust and sweeping in denunciation, were brought to his notice. He had reason to believe that English criticism was a two-edged sword rather than the surgeon's knife probing to cure; yet he received much encouragement from private sources during his engagement of five weeks. He acted four characters, *Shylock*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Richard III.*, and *Richelieu*. Mr. Sothern prevailed on Mr. Buckstone to allow Mr. Booth to play *Richard III.*, and the tragedy was eventually put upon the stage, but in such a manner as to seem a burlesque. One man in armor rendered himself ridiculous by kneeling and not being able to rise again, and another lifted his mailed arm and could not lower it without difficulty; their tin armor so clumsily constructed formed a ludicrous contrast to the massiveness of the king's complete dress of steel. Mr. Buckstone reluctantly consented that Booth should produce *Richelieu*. For that event the actors had brought crowds of friends behind the scenes to witness a great failure; and the hisses of the audience, which as yet had not been forthcoming, were confidently expected at this production. Before the close of the first act marks of pleasure instead of the disapprobation

anticipated were distinctly heard; and even the non-paying audience behind the scenes partook of the enthusiasm. Mr. Chippendale, who had frequently been lavish of kind words to Edwin as a boy and had often professed friendship for his father, held an unwelcoming hand to the hard-used actor struggling against the prejudice and conventionalism of a foreign country. During the fourth act of the play, as Edmund Kean would have said, "the pit rose at him." It was reported that Mr. Chippendale, leaving the theatre, rushed over the way to Mr. Buckstone, saying, he had seen the finest piece of acting in his life. Mr. Buckstone always regretted that he had not opened with "Richelieu."

During Booth's residence at Fulham his only child, Edwina, was born, in December, 1861.

On the completion of his London engagement, Booth went to Manchester, where he acted for three weeks, Mr. Henry Irving being a member of the stock company; thence he proceeded to Liverpool and fulfilled an engagement of two weeks. A marble medallion of him by Küntze was in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1862.

After a visit to Paris he was presented with the sword which Lemaitre had worn in "Ruy Blas," bearing upon the blade the name "Frederic Lemaitre" and the date of his first performance of the rôle. No theatres were open to him in London on his return from France. Fechter, then at the height of success at the Princess's Theatre, monopolized the Shaksperian drama, and as he was in receipt of handsome offers for New

York, he concluded to leave England, sailing on the "Great Eastern" steamship, which then made her last voyage as a passenger vessel.

On his return from England Booth played a very successful engagement at the Winter Garden Theatre, New York, commencing Sept. 29, 1862. In his support were Mr. and Mrs. F. B. Conway.

At Philadelphia some months later he played *Macbeth*, to the *Lady Macbeth* of Miss Charlotte Cushman, for the benefit of the Woman's Branch of the United States Sanitary Commission, raising upwards of thirteen hundred dollars for the fund.

About this time Booth, on account of the failing health of his wife, decided to take a house at Dorchester, Mass., where he left his family, after playing a few weeks in Boston, to open at the Winter Garden, Feb. 9, 1863. He never saw Mrs. Booth alive again. Her sudden death before he could reach her bedside abruptly terminated his engagement in New York. Mr. T. W. Parsons, in his collection of poems entitled "The Magnolia," has paid a touching compliment to the worth of a good woman in his memorial of Mary Devlin Booth.

Booth did not resume his professional duties for some months; Lawrence Barrett, who was his leading support, filling up the break in his New York engagement by acting *Richard III.*, and continuing with *Ruy Blas*, which Booth had had in course of preparation. On his return he wished to assume this part of *Ruy Blas*, but Mr. Barrett considered it unfair that he should be cast for the character of *Don Cæsar* when

he had already been playing the leading rôle, on its first production in the metropolis. Booth then introduced the scene of *Don Cæsar*, which had been omitted in the English version, and offered it as an inducement to Mr. Barrett, who accepted, and acted the character remarkably well, "taking," as the star said, "all the wind out of my sails."

In October, 1863, the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia was offered for sale. At such a precarious time, during a disastrous civil war, few men were willing to assume so great a risk; but John S. Clarke and Edwin Booth conjointly ventured to make the purchase, feeling that they would be lucky to be able to pay for it entirely in thirteen years. This they did, however, in three!

At Niblo's Garden, under the management of William Wheatley, who had lately dissolved partnership with John S. Clarke in Philadelphia, Booth presented "The Fool's Revenge" for the first time in New York, March 28, 1864, the play meeting with decided success. In his support were Miss Ada Clifton, Miss Mary Wells, Miss Rose Eytinge, and J. W. Collier.

Edwin Booth, John S. Clarke, and William Stuart took a lease of the Winter Garden Theatre, New York, for a term of years, opening the house Aug. 18, 1864, with an engagement of Mr. Clarke. Booth had long desired to have a leading metropolitan theatre under his own control, where he could mount his plays in a correct and elaborate style and confine himself entirely to the legitimate drama. Mr. Stuart was known, however, as the "manager" of the theatre, although his

duties did not extend to the stage department or the production of plays. He received a large salary, and occupied a suite of rooms in the theatre, from which he narrowly escaped when the building was destroyed by fire.

Booth cast his first, and the only vote of his life, for Abraham Lincoln, in the autumn of 1864. A short time after, on the night of Nov. 25, 1864, the three Booth brothers appeared in the play of "Julius Cæsar," — Junius Brutus Booth as *Cassius*, Edwin as *Brutus*, and John Wilkes as *Marc Antony*. The theatre was crowded to suffocation, people standing in every available place. The greatest excitement prevailed, and the aged mother of the Booths sat in a private box to witness this performance. The three brothers received and merited the applause of that immense audience, for they acted well, and presented a picture too strikingly historic to be soon forgotten. The eldest, powerfully built and handsome as an antique Roman, Edwin, with his magnetic fire and graceful dignity, and John Wilkes in the perfection of youthful beauty, stood side by side, again and again, before the curtain, to receive the lavish applause of the audience mingled with waving of handkerchiefs and every mark of enthusiasm.

Nov. 26, 1864, Booth produced "Hamlet" at the Winter Garden, and acted the *Dane* for one hundred nights consecutively, — the longest run that any Shaksperian play had ever known in America at that time. It was more splendidly produced than any other that had ever been presented, with the exception, perhaps, of "King John" and "Richard III.," many years

previously, at the old Park Theatre, under the direction of Mr. Charles Kean, and which, it is said, were comparative failures financially, although most expensive and elaborate productions.

Of Booth's *Hamlet*, at that time, George William Curtis wrote: —

"A really fine actor is as uncommon as a really great dramatic poet. Yet what Garrick was in *Richard III.*, or Edmund Kean in *Shylock*, we are sure Edwin Booth is in *Hamlet*. . . . The scenery was thoughtfully studied, and the effect was entirely harmonious. . . . Booth looks the ideal *Hamlet;* for the *Hamlet* of our imagination, which is the *Hamlet* of Shakspere, is not the scant-of-breath gentleman whom the severer critics insist that he should be. He is a sad, slight prince. . . . Booth is altogether princely. His costume is still the solemn suit of sables, varied according to his fancy of greater fitness; and his small, lithe form, with the mobility and intellectual sadness of his face, and his large, melancholy eyes, satisfy the most fastidious imagination that this is *Hamlet* as he lived in Shakspere's world. His playing throughout has an exquisite tone, like an old picture. The charm of the finest portraits — of Raphael's 'Julius' or 'Leo,' of Titian's 'Francis I.' or 'Ippolita di Medici,' of Vandyck's 'Charles I.' — is not the drawing, or even the coloring, so much as the nameless, subtle harmony which is called 'tone.' So in Booth's *Hamlet* it is not any particular scene, or passage, or look, or movement, that conveys the impression; it is the consistency of every part with every other, the pervasive sense of a mind of a true gentleman

sadly strained and jarred. Through the whole play the mind is borne on in mournful reverie. It is not so much what he says or does that we observe, for under all, beneath every scene and word and act, we hear what is not audible, — the melancholy music of 'the sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh.' This gives a curious reality to the whole. . . . Booth's conception of *Hamlet* is that of a morbid mind conscious of its power to master the mystery of life, which, in its details, baffles and overwhelms him. There is, therefore, a serene consciousness of superiority in his behavior, even in the most perplexed moments. In the chamber scene with his mother, when the ghost passes and *Hamlet* falls for a moment prostrate with emotion at his disappearance, the *Queen* insinuates that he is mad. There is a kind of calm, pitying disdain, mingled with the sense that her feeling is natural, with which *Hamlet* steps toward her, his finger on his pulse. The tragedy in 'Hamlet' is not only the vital curiosity about existence, the mastering love of life which almost subdues his soul with fear and doubt and keeps it tense with eager questioning, but it is the conviction of a mind morbid with this continual strain that it is a most sacred duty to end another life, to plunge a guilty soul into the abyss of doubt, and that soul the one dearest to his mother. This explains the fascination which the idea of his uncle's death always exercises upon his mind, and also his inability to do more than dream and doubt over the action. It is this complication which produces one of Booth's finest scenes. In the interview with his mother he stabs *Polonius* through the arras. For an

instant the possibility of what he has done sweeps over his mind. Always the victim of complex emotions, the instinctive satisfaction of knowing the act done is mingled with the old familiar horror of the doom to which he may have consigned his uncle. With sword uplifted, and a vague terror both of hope and fear in his tone and face, *Hamlet* does not slide rapidly back, and hurriedly exclaim, 'Is it the King?' but, tottering with emotion, he asks slowly in an appalling staccato, 'Is — it — the — king?' The cumulative sadness of the play was never so palpable as in Booth's acting. It is a spell from which you cannot escape."

At the expiration of the hundred nights of "Hamlet," a committee of distinguished persons had arranged to present Booth with a medal commemorative of the event; but it was not yet completed, and he finished his New York season by filling the last week with different plays.

Going from New York to Boston, he was playing a very lucrative engagement, and on the night of the 14th of April, 1865, acted *Sir Edward Mortimer*. On the following morning the news of the great calamity which had fallen upon the country, and particularly upon the Booth family, was brought to him. He left Boston on that evening, and arrived at New York early the ensuing morning, repairing at once to his own home. He was surrounded by devoted friends, who strove by every attention in their power to prove how highly he was esteemed as a public man and a citizen.

Grief and shame, and the dread of having to forfeit his position on the stage, had in the course of a few

months sadly worn his fragile body; and that introspective look, which some writer remarks as "characteristic of the Booths," seemed to fit with the lines, —

"I have that within, which passeth show."

He had thought never to appear upon the stage again, but the more violent the tempest the more subdued the calm which follows; and the reaction proved as reasonable in this case as the denunciation had been fierce. With conflicting emotions, which required an indomitable force of will to keep in check, Edwin Booth made his reappearance on the stage at the Winter Garden Theatre in the character of *Hamlet*, Jan. 3, 1866, after having been in retirement many months. People came from Washington, Baltimore, Boston, and Philadelphia to witness the event, and the audience comprised many distinguished persons. Outside the streets were thronged, angry threats were made to shoot him; but on the other hand cool, common sense was heard, and both within and without the theatre the police force was a restraining power.

In his "Sketch of Edwin Booth," William Winter says: —

"Had there not existed, however, an imperative necessity that Edwin Booth should return to the stage, he would never have acted again. He reappeared on the 3d of January, 1866, at the Winter Garden Theatre. An immense throng of persons gave him welcome, and it was such a welcome as might well have lightened the saddest heart and the most anxious mind. Nine cheers hailed the melancholy Dane upon his first entrance.

The spectators rose and waved their hats and handkerchiefs. Bouquets fell in a shower upon the stage, and there was a tempest of applause. Nor was the welcome less kind in communities out of New York. Wherever he appeared after this momentous return to the stage he found a free-hearted greeting and respectful sympathy, and so little by little he got back into the old way of work, and his professional career resumed its flow in the old channel."

The "Hamlet Medal" (intended for presentation on the one hundredth night) was received by Booth on January 22d during this engagement. It was an offering of appreciation and respect from the chief citizens of New York and students of Shakspere, and was presented publicly after the performance of "Hamlet." The stage represented a drawing-room. The bands of the principal theatres of New York united in giving the Danish National Hymn. Booth, dressed as *Hamlet*, met the committee on their arrival. Among the vast concourse of people were many eminent citizens; and on the stage could be singled out Admiral Farragut, Major-General Robert Anderson, John T. Hoffman Governor of New York, George Bancroft the historian, Charles A. Dana, Judge Daly; S. R. Gifford, Launt Thompson, Jervis McEntee, and many distinguished artists; and Richard O'Gorman and William Fullerton, members of the New York Bar. The latter gentleman spoke the following graceful tribute: —

"MR. BOOTH, — You have deservedly won a position in your profession which few men have ever attained. The representation of one of Shakspere's plays for

one hundred consecutive nights to overflowing and delighted audiences is a triumph unrecorded in the annals of the stage until you accomplished it, and is well worthy of commemoration. But it is not alone your success as an actor which has attracted public attention and called forth this demonstration. You have won alike the applause and respect of your fellow-men; and a numerous body of your friends and admirers, through their committee now here present, desire to present you with some evidence of their appreciation of your genius as an actor, and their respect for you as a man, more substantial and enduring than the fleeting, though hearty plaudits nightly heard within these walls. To that end they have instructed me to present you with this medal. Intrinsically, it is of little worth; but as a token of the regard of your fellow-citizens, it possesses a significance far more valuable than the gold of which it is composed, or the artistic skill which has beautified it. It was thought proper that this presentation should take place on the occasion of the play of 'Hamlet,' with which your name will ever be associated, and on the very spot of your greatest professional achievements, thereby affording your numerous friends an opportunity of witnessing it. But the choice of time and place for this ceremony has another and a deeper meaning. It intends a recognition of your lifelong efforts to raise the moral standard of the drama, and to encourage you in your future endeavors to accomplish that result. In conclusion, I beg you to accept this gift; and at the same time, allow me to express the universal wish that you may live to win new triumphs in a profession

which your virtues have elevated and your talents adorned."

The medal is made of gold, and is about three inches in size; it is of oval form, and is surrounded by a thick golden serpent with its head pendent, over which are the skull of *Yorick*, the crossed foils, and thickly massed bunches of *Ophelia's* flowers. A golden ribbon around the oval bears the motto, "Palmam qui meruit ferat." At the top is the Danish crown, from which hang two heavy garlands of laurel and myrtle gracefully festooned; beneath, in *alto-rilievo*, is Edwin Booth's head as *Hamlet*. The medal is suspended from a brooch richly chased, with the face of Shakspere between the masks of Tragedy and Comedy. On the reverse is engraven, "To Edwin Booth, in commemoration of the unprecedented 'run' of 'Hamlet,' as enacted by him in New York City for one hundred nights, 1865."

In January, 1866, Booth and Clarke obtained the lease of the Boston Theatre at a rental of sixteen thousand dollars a year. Offers as high as twenty-six thousand dollars were made by other parties, but the directors preferred these two gentlemen, who managed now conjointly three first-class theatres in the three principal cities. After a very successful engagement in Boston, Booth, on the 23d of April, 1866, made his reappearance on the Philadelphia stage to commemorate the anniversary of the "Birth and Death of Shakspere." He had not acted in that city for two years, and during a most remunerative engagement of fifty-one nights he performed *Othello*, *Romeo*, *Shylock*, *Rich-*

ard III., *Ruy Blas*, *Don Cesar de Bazan*, *Hamlet*, *Richelieu*, *Petruchio*, *The Stranger*, *Bertuccio*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, and *Pescara*. "Hamlet" was produced in magnificent style, and acted for twenty-one nights, the other plays being many times repeated.

During the occupancy of the Winter Garden Theatre by Booth and Clarke, the latter usually acted there from the month of August until Christmas, Booth following and playing until Easter, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams and other attractions filling the intervening time. John S. Clarke sold his interest to Booth, and retired finally from the management early in the year 1867, a few months before the building was burned.

Booth produced "Richelieu" in magnificent style on the 1st February, 1866, using the costumes he had brought with him from Paris for another play. Charles Barron was the *De Mauprat*, John Dyott *Joseph*, C. K. Mason *Hoguet*, Miss Rose Eytinge *Julie*, and Miss Marie Wilkins *Marion de Lorme*.

On the 29th December of the same year he played *Iago* to the *Othello* of Bagumil Dawison. *Othello* spoke in German, *Iago* in English, and *Desdemona* (Madame Methua Scheller) in German to *Othello* and in English to the rest of the *dramatis personæ*. "The Merchant of Venice" was the event of this season of 1866–67, and was produced in magnificent style Jan. 28, 1867, running for seven weeks. On the 22d of March "Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin," was presented, and early on the morning of March 23d the theatre was burned to the ground.

The fire was the result of an accident, and the thea-

tre, which was uninsured, was never rebuilt. Booth lost the whole of his valuable wardrobe, including many articles prized for their association sake even more than for their actual worth. Some had belonged to his father, others to Edmund Kean, John Philip Kemble, and to Mrs. Siddons.

Owing to the great success which had attended the production of his plays at the Winter Garden Theatre, he was filled with an ambitious desire to build a superior edifice where he could indulge his love of the æsthetic and realistic as well as show deference to the legitimate in art. This had been his earnest endeavor throughout his later engagements, and the production of his plays had so engrossed his attention that he had refused most tempting offers from the West; money at that time being a secondary object. With his mind intent upon pursuing this grand scheme of erecting a theatre on his own responsibility, he now had recourse to the Western managers, and accepted offers that proved most remunerative. He did not act again for two years in New York; but, having secured the site for his theatre, he travelled and worked laboriously to effect what he now calls "a Quixotic fancy."

In 1867, during his engagement in Chicago, Miss Mary M'Vicker made her first appearance as *Juliet* to his *Romeo*. He proceeded to Baltimore to fulfil an engagement of four weeks, opening as *Sir Giles Overreach*, Miss M'Vicker performing *Margaret*. During the first week, while playing *Pescara* in the "Apostate," he met with a serious accident. Mr. Charles Vandenhoff as *Hemeya*, in rushing to kill *Pescara*, was so excited

that he deliberately stabbed Booth three times in the hand which he had fortunately raised to ward off the blow from his breast. He had neglected to have the sharp dagger blunted, and Mr. Vandenhoff was unconscious how often or how furiously he struck in his excitement. After responding to the call of the audience, Booth for the first time realized how badly he was hurt and on leaving the stage fainted from pain. He acted the next night, however, and for two nights following, in the plays of "Hamlet," "Richard III.," and "Othello," carrying his right arm in a sling and fencing with his left hand, even drawing his sword, which he accomplished by a quick upward movement, whipping it not ungracefully from the scabbard. The next week he was obliged to desist from acting as he was threatened with erysipelas, and the arm had become exceedingly painful.

After a brief rest he was enabled to finish his engagement, performing the two weeks following. He shortly afterward made a tour of all the cities of the South and Southwest for the first time in eight years.

The building of Booth's Theatre consumed nearly two years, during which time he was never idle; the excavations for the foundation were made by blasting a solid rock twenty-two feet in diameter, and the pit dug was the extent of the entire stage. The magnificent structure was at length completed at the cost of over a million of dollars, and was said to be surpassed in grandeur only by the Grand Opera House in Paris. The decorations of the interior were most artistic and delicate; everything was perfect in regard to taste and

elegance. There were no "wings" on the stage, all of the scenery being so constructed as to sink or be elevated above the "flies" by hydraulic power; the stage could be thrown open from wall to wall, and the effect perspectively with the great altitude added to its vastness and grandeur. The theatre opened on the 3d of February, 1869, with the production of "Romeo and Juliet," given in the original text of Shakspere for the first time in America. The minutiæ of stage decoration, costume, and equipment received Booth's own supervision, as their correctness had engrossed his time and labor. In the second act, the house of *Juliet* measured sixty feet in height, and had two balconies one above the other. Two trees measured fifty and sixty feet. For the "loggia" scene in the third act was a line of connected arches of great height extending backward to the full depth of the stage; these flanked a wide courtyard in which the tops of trees were visible, suggesting the idea of depth. *Romeo's* ladder was thrown over the balustrade of a balcony of this solidly constructed house. The "loggia scene" employed fifty men to set and to draw it above the "flies." The production of this play attracted immense audiences for sixty-eight nights, Booth and Miss M'Vicker playing *Romeo* and *Juliet*, and Mr. Edwin Adams *Mercutio*.

The "Moor of Venice" was put upon the stage April 19, 1869, on a scale of similar magnificence; Edwin Adams and Edwin Booth alternating the characters of *Othello* and *Iago*, Miss M'Vicker assuming the part of *Desdemona*. Booth, by an ingenious contrivance, had the scenery of "Romeo and Juliet" rear-

ranged with the addition of a few small pieces to answer every requisition of the "Moor of Venice," thus illustrating that the eye of the master saves the laborer's hands. He kept the theatre open during the summer, and produced the play of "Enoch Arden," June 21, 1869. Edwin Adams personated the principal character, and Booth received a letter from Mr. Tennyson relative to the successful production of his poem.

Booth and Miss M'Vicker were married June 7, 1869. In this year the lady retired from the stage.*

The plays of "Romeo and Juliet," "Winter's Tale," "Hamlet," "Richelieu," and "Julius Cæsar," were produced in most elaborate and costly style. "The Assassination of Cæsar," from Gérôme's great picture, was beautifully copied for the scene of the latter play. "The Moor of Venice," "Macbeth," "Lady of Lyons," "The Iron Chest," "Merchant of Venice," "Richard III.," "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," "Fool's Revenge," "The Fall of Tarquin," and "Don Cesar de Bazan" were put upon the stage and mounted in superior style. They were frequently repeated, and one of the previously mentioned five plays was produced each year. He had been throughout unsparing of strength and energy, and indefatigable in his labor, each department of the theatre dividing his attention, for the onus of this undertaking devolved on himself alone. He travelled and played elsewhere, while other "stars" filled the time at Booth's Theatre, among whom were Miss Neilson, Joseph Jefferson, Miss Bateman, and J. S. Clarke.

* Mary M'Vicker Booth died in New York, Nov. 13, 1881, while this volume was passing through the press. — ED.

Edwin Adams was the leading man of the company, and had the privilege of producing his own plays on Saturday nights, the same arrangement being effected with Lawrence Barrett in the next season. Booth's management of Booth's Theatre was remarkable for the continuity of its success, but the outlay was enormous and the expenses incredible; he allowed himself rest neither for body nor mind, and, when absent in other cities, sent large sums of money to New York to liquidate his debts.

Finally, the strain on mental and physical health became too severe, and in 1873 he concluded to lease the theatre to his elder brother, J. B. Booth, in preference to other applicants. This management not meeting with the desired success, the theatre passed into new hands, and Booth's monetary affairs became so complicated and embarrassed, owing to his ignorance of the financial details of business, that, notwithstanding his long-continued success throughout the country, the result of this scheme was bankruptcy. Although released from the cares of management he was now compelled to work harder and to travel more, devoting every energy to free himself from the incubus of debt. Out of the failure of this great project, which was a noble endeavor by individual effort to elevate the drama in America and to create for his country a standard of dramatic excellence that should be felt among older nations, came happily renewed strength and determination, not the relaxation of despair or grief for wasted effort that was feared by his friends.

Shortly after his bankruptcy Booth retired for a brief

rest to his wife's country home at Cos-Cob, Connecticut, having surrendered to his creditors all his private and personal property, including his books, pictures, and extensive theatrical wardrobe. While in this quiet retreat he was thrown from a carriage and severely injured in the arm and side. This accident caused a postponement of an eight weeks' summer engagement with Mr. Augustin Daly of the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York. He opened at that house, however, Oct. 25, 1875. During this engagement he produced for the first time his own version or adaptation of Shakspere's "Richard II." He had never seen the character acted, and had never played it himself. It was a very great success, and has become a favorite part of his because of its eloquence and force. Edmund Kean and the elder Booth had performed this character, but it had fallen into disuse. Edwin Booth desired to restore the tragedy to the stage; and, by reason of its profundity of knowledge, its intimate acquaintance with humanity, and its exquisite diction, it deserves the place he has given it in his repertory.

During this season, under Mr. Daly's management, he produced "King Lear" in magnificent style and from the original text, after his own adaptation of Shakspere's "King Lear." This, too, was eminently successful. After acting his usual round of characters (but with his maimed left arm in a sling), the engagement terminated. He went with Mr. J. T. Ford of Baltimore on a protracted Southern tour, giving fifty-two performances. He then travelled with Mr. M'Vicker and with other managers, through the Western cities,

successfully fulfilling these engagements and terminating the season in June, 1876.

For several years he had refused all offers from California; but now that he required a vast deal of money to free himself from pressing obligations, he concluded to undertake the journey at the tempting inducements held forth by Mr. John McCullough. Their train *en route* to San Francisco stopped at several places. They visited Salt Lake City, where he gave a half-promise to act on his return journey; they went to Virginia City, and in twelve days from the date of starting he arrived in San Francisco, Sept. 5, 1876, exactly twenty years to a day since he had left that city.

His engagement at the San Francisco theatre was attended by overwhelming success. While in California he met his old friend, D. C. Anderson, and together they wandered over the busy metropolis that had overgrown the straggling village they had known. Their "Ranch" was now a tenement in a back street, and the "marsh" was built over; for the great, prosperous city had reached outward in all directions, embracing the once barren waste.

Booth returned to the East, and opened at the Lyceum Theatre, New York, under Mr. M'Vicker's management, in November, 1876. This engagement lasted ten weeks. The great political disturbance, and the fatal occurrence at the Brooklyn Theatre, burned by fire, with a loss of more than three hundred lives, Dec. 5, 1876, caused so great a panic that all places of amusement were avoided in New York; and the fright extended to other cities, so that the latter part of

the engagement was somewhat injured. Mr. M'Vicker was very anxious to resign his two weeks' lease of the Academy of Music in Brooklyn on account of the disinclination of the community to visit theatres, but his efforts proved unsuccessful. Booth was obliged to fill the engagement, anticipating a complete failure; but, contrary to all expectations, he played to enormous business. Under the same management he visited various cities, acting three weeks at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, two weeks in Baltimore, and later performing in several towns of Connecticut.

He then appeared at the Globe Theatre in Boston for a period of three weeks, and closed this protracted engagement on the 19th of May, 1877. For this season he had received one hundred and twenty-one thousand three hundred and fifty-three dollars. And his total receipts from October, 1875, to May, 1877, enabled him to settle with his creditors, and obtain release from bankruptcy, the time comprising fifty-six acting weeks.

After a rest during the summer months he commenced another engagement under the same management, on Sept. 10, 1877, in Chicago. He played in Cincinnati, Louisville, Cleveland, St. Louis, Buffalo, Lockport, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, and Albany. In January, 1878, he rented Booth's Theatre, and under his own management acted for six weeks. Later he acted at the Park Theatre, Boston, for three weeks, two weeks at Pittsburg, two at Baltimore, and filled three weeks at Clarke's Broad Street Theatre in Philadelphia. At the Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York

he played for five weeks, then visited Detroit and Chicago. He had reaped a plentiful harvest in all these cities, but he had labored indefatigably and travelled without loss of time.

His engagement at Chicago was for a period of four weeks, beginning the 14th of April, 1879. In the second week, on the night of the 23d (Shakspere's birthday), he was shot at while playing *Richard II.* There was intense excitement throughout the theatre, and the deed created the fiercest indignation against the offender, who was arrested and secured, but not until Booth rose at the third shot, walked to the footlights, and pointed out to the audience the would-be assassin as the pistol was again levelled at his head. At the trial which followed the man was proved to be insane, and he has ever since been confined at the asylum at Elgin, Ill. One of the bullets, which entered the scenery almost directly behind Booth, he has had set in a gold cartridge cap, upon which is engraved, "From Mark Gray to Edwin Booth, April 23, 1879." This, as a grim reminder of his danger and escape, he wears as an Egyptian might wear an amulet. By subsequent measurement the aim of the lunatic was shown to have been very clever, for had Booth risen at the proper and expected moment one of the bullets at least must have passed through his heart.

The newspapers were filled with wild accounts of the shooting affray, and telegrams, cable despatches, and letters from "troops of friends" served to show him how high he stood in the estimation of his countrymen at home and abroad. He needed such sympathy to

stimulate him in the pursuit of his profession, for so many adverse circumstances seemed to conspire to enervate and overcome his powers. When this engagement closed he gladly took his departure from Chicago, and did not act again until October 6th, when he performed at Ford's Opera House in Baltimore for two weeks, going thence to the Broad Street Theatre, Philadelphia, under the same management. At the Grand Opera House in New York he fulfilled an engagement of four weeks. In March, 1880, he acted under Mr. Abbey's management at the Park Theatre, Boston. It was one of the finest engagements on record, and created the greatest excitement. The sale of seats lasted from eight A. M. until eight P. M. A long unbroken line of people was at the box-office during those hours, and before the close of the second week all the seats were sold for the remainder of the engagement. Crowds were nightly turned from the doors, and every available spot in the theatre was given up for the accommodation of the audience.

At Booth's Theatre, New York, in April, 1880, he played four weeks under the management of Mr. Abbey, and, after an engagement in Brooklyn, performed *Petruccio* at the Madison Square Theatre, New York, for the benefit of "The Edgar Poe Memorial Fund," his last appearance in America before his trip to Europe.

On the 15th of June he was tendered a public breakfast at Delmonico's, New York, one of the most brilliant and successful entertainments ever given in America, and probably the highest compliment ever paid to any member of his profession. The church,

the bench, the bar, the world of letters, arts, and affairs, all gathered to do honor to the departing actor, and to express their appreciation of him as an artist and a man. Speeches were made by Judge John R. Brady, who presided, by Judge Charles P. Daly, Algernon S. Sullivan, Edmund C. Stedman, Rev. Robert Collyer, Rev. Ferdinand C. Ewer, Lawrence Barrett, Lester Wallack, Joseph Jefferson, William Warren, and a poem written for the occasion was read by William Winter.

Booth sailed from New York on the 30th of June, 1880, with his wife and daughter. After spending some months in travel in Great Britain and on the Continent, he opened the New Princess's Theatre, London, on the 6th November, 1880, as *Hamlet*. Subsequently, at this house, he appeared as *Richelieu*, *Bertuccio*, *Othello*, *Iago*, *Petruccio*, *Shylock*, and *King Lear*. Of this successful engagement, and of that which followed at the Lyceum Theatre, London, under the management of Henry Irving, where he played *Iago* and *Othello* with that gentleman, alternating the parts, there is not space to speak here.

Edwin Booth still lives, and still pursues his career of usefulness in his profession. Therefore it is hardly time yet, and it should perhaps fall to the lot of some other writer, to analyze the nobility of his character, and unveil to the public the beauties of his private life. Let it be said merely that as a citizen and as a man Edwin Booth has been always devoted, upright, true; the kindest and most tender of sons to an erratic father and to a widowed mother, in every other relation, as brother, husband, father, friend, worthy of affection and

of all praise. Long may it be ere "Finis" is written in his volume of life!

For what she has said in these pages the writer can only quote for her defence this curt excuse, —

> "If I have spent my time ill to write,
> Let them not be so idle as to read."

LINES TO EDWIN BOOTH.

WRITTEN IN ITALY, 1875.

In dim old palaces, in ancient galleries,
Through dusty corridors and sunless aisles,
    Thy weird voice taunts me,
    Thy strange face haunts me
With sombre brooding or with radiant smiles.

What grand pale faces fill these quaint places!
What sculptured heroes and perfected art, —
    Dim clue affording,
    And yet according
This deathless beauty with thy living heart.

True art thus purely transmitted surely
Through all the ages ever new, —
    Thine artist spirit
    Could but inherit
A gift so wondrous, rare, and true.

Some dark grim hero, or blood-stained Nero,
Link thee and Gloster, the Moor, Macbeth,
While Bruno sainted,
Divinely painted,
Is Hamlet apostrophizing Death.

Under night's cover, Francesca's lover
Hath Romeo's passion-tender face;
And Shylock even
Declaims to Heaven
In an old Rabbi's holy place.

'T is not home-longing, nor memory thronging,
Nor yet the love 'tween thee and me,
That thus I trace
Thy voice and face
In sculpture, painting, minstrelsy!

But, magical spirit, none can inherit
Thine awful greatness, save thine alone!
From earliest times
Thro' various climes
Nature preserves her monotone.

From youth to age, this heritage
Guard *thou* with loving jealousy,
That men may name thee,
Thy country claim thee,
A son of genius, incorrupt, and free.

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